

REFLECTIONS
ON

Aristotle's
TREATISE OF
POESIE.

CONTAINING
The Necessary, Rational, and
Universal RULES for *Epick*,
Dramatick, and the other sorts
of POETRY.

With *Reflections* on the Works of the
Ancient and Modern POETS,
And their Faults Noted.

By R.^{ene} RAPIN.

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English

PREFACE

OF THE
TRANSLATOR.

THE Artist would not take pains to polish a Diamond, if none besides himself were quick-sighted enough to discern the flaw; And Poets would grow negligent, if the Criticks had not a strict eye over their miscarriages. Yet it often happens, that this eye is so distorted by envy or ill nature, that it sees nothing aright. Some Criticks are like Wasps, that rather annoy the Bees, than terrifie the Drones.

For this sort of Learning, our Neighbour Nations have got far the start of us; in the last *Century*, *Italy* swarm'd with Criticks, where, amongst many of less note, *Castelvetro* opposed all comers; and the famous Academy *La Crusca* was alwayes impeaching some or other of the best Authors. *Spain*, in those dayes, bred great Wits, but, I think, was never so

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39

The Preface of the Translator.

so crowded, that they needed to fall out and quarrel amongst themselves. But from *Italy, France* took the Cudgels; and though some light strokes passed in the dayes of *Marot, Baif, &c.* yet they fell not to it in earnest, nor was any noble Contest amongst them, till the *Royal Academy* was founded, and Cardinal *Richlieu* encouraged and rallied all the scattered Wits under his Banner. Then *Malherb* reform'd their ancient licentious Poetry; and *Corneille's Cid* rais'd many Factions amongst them. At this time with us many great Wits flourish'd, but *Ben Johnson*, I think, had all the Critical learning to himself; and till of late years *England* was as free from Criticks, as it is from *Wolves*, that a harmless well-meaning Book might pass without any danger. But now this privilege, whatever extraordinary Talent it requires, is usurped by the most ignorant: and they who are least acquainted with the game, are aptest to bark at every thing that comes in their way. Our fortune is, *Aristotle*, on whom our Author makes these *Reflections*, came to this great work better accomplished. He who Criticis'd on the ancient and his contemporary Philosophers; on *Pythagoras*,

The Preface of the Translator.

thagoras, Democritus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Epicharmus, Parmenides, Xenophanes, Melissus, Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Endoxus, Solon, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Plato, Speusippus; who examin'd and censur'd the *Laws and Politics of Minos, Lycurgus, Solon, Hippodamus, Phaleas*, and all the other Commonwealths; 'tis he, I say, that undertakes this Province, to pass a judgment on the *Poets*, and their *Works*; and him Antiquity first honoured with the name of *Critick*.

It is indeed suspected that he dealt not alwayes fairly with the Philosophers, misreciting sometimes, and misinterpreting their opinions. But I find him not tax'd of that injustice to the *Poets*, in whose favour he is so ingenious, that to the disadvantage of his own profession, he declares, *That Tragedy more conduces to the instruction of Mankind, than even Philosophy it self*. And however cryed down in the Schools, and vilified by some modern Philosophers; since Men have had a taste for good sense, and could discern the beauties of correct writing, he is prefer'd in the *politest Courts of Europe*, and by the *Poets* held in great veneration. Not that these can servilely yield to his Authority,

The Preface of the Translator:

thority, who, of all men living, affect liberty. The truth is, what *Aristotle* writes on this Subject, are not the dictates of his own magisterial will, or dry deductions of his *Metaphysicks*: But the *Poets* were his Masters, and what was their practice, he reduced to principles. Nor would the *modern Poets* blindly resign to this practice of the *Ancients*, were not the Reasons convincing and clear as any demonstration in *Mathematicks*. 'Tis only needful that we understand them, for our consent to the truth of them. The *Arabians*, 'tis confess'd, who glory in their *Poets* and *Poetry*, more than all the world besides; and who, I suppose, first brought the art of *Riming* into *Europe*, observe but little these Laws of *Aristotle*:
On Arist. de yet *Averois* rather chooses
Poët. to blame the practice of his
Countrymen as vicious, than to allow any imputation on the doctrine of this *Philosopher* as imperfect. Fancy with them is predominant, is wild, vast and unbridled, o're which their judgment has little command or authority: hence their conceptions are monstrous, and have nothing of exactness, nothing of resemblance or proportion.

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The Preface of the Translator.

The Author of these *Reflections* is as well known amongst the *Criticks*, as *Aristotle* to the *Philosophers*: never man gave his judgment so generally, and never was judgment more free and impartial. He might be thought an enemy to the *Spaniards*, were he not as sharp on the *Italians*; and he might be suspected to envy the *Italians*, were he not as severe on his own Countreymen. These Nations make it a Problem, whether a *Dutchman* or *German* may be a *Wit* or no; and our Author finds none worthy of his Censure amongst them, except *Heinsius* and *Grotius*. Amongst us he gives *Buchanan* a particular Character: but for such as writ in the *English* Tongue, he has not, I presume, understood the language so well, to pass a judgment on them: onely in general he confesses, that we have a *Genius* for *Tragedy* above all other people; one reason he gives we cannot allow of, *viz. The disposition of our Nation, which, he saith, is delighted with cruel things.* 'Tis ordinary to judge of Peoples manners and inclinations, by their publick diversions; and Travellers, who see some of our *Tragedies*, may conclude us certainly the cruellest minded people in *Christendom*.

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The Preface of the Translator.

In another place this Author sayes of us, *That we are men in an Island, divided from the rest of the world, and that we love blood in our sports.* And, perhaps, it may be true, that on our Stage are more Murders than on all the Theatres in Europe. And they who have not time to learn our Language, or be acquainted with our Conversation, may there in three hours time behold so much bloodshed as may affright them from the inhospitable shore, as from the Cyclops Den. Let our Tragedy-makers consider this, and examine whether it be the disposition of the People, or their own Caprice that brings this Censure on the best natur'd Nation under the Sun.

His other Reason is our Language, which, he sayes, *is proper for great expressions.* The Spanish is big and fastuous, proper only for *Rodomontades*, and compar'd with other Languages, is like the Kettle-drum to Musick.

The Italian is fittest for *Burlesque*, and better becomes the mouth of *Petrolin* and *Arloquin* in their *Farces*, than any Heroick character. The perpetual termination in vowels is childish, and themselves confess, rather sweet than grave.

The French wants sinews for great and
heroick

The Preface of the Translator.

heroick Subjects, and even in Love-mat-
ters, by their own confession, is a very Infant; the *Italians* call it the *Kitchen-language*, it being so copious and flowing on those occasions.

*Mesnardire.
& al.
Lenga di
Masseritie.*

The *German* still continues rude and unpolisht, not yet filed and civiliz'd by the commerce and intermixture with strangers to that smoothness and humanity which the *English* may boast of.

The dissyllable Rimes force the *Italians* and *Spaniards* on the *Stanza* in *Heroicks*; which, besides many other disadvantages, renders the Language unfit for *Tragedy*.

The *French* now onely use the long *Alexandrins*, and would make up in length what they want in strength and substance; yet are they too faint and languishing, and attain not that *numerosity* which the dignity of *Heroick Verse* requires, and which is ordinary in an *English Verse* of *ten syllables*. But I shall not here examine the weight, the fulness, the vigour, force, gravity, and the fitness of the *English* for *Heroick Poesie* above all other Languages; the world expecting these matters learnedly and largely discus-

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The Preface of the Translator.

fed in a particular-Treatise on that Subject.

But from our Language proceed to our Writers, and with the freedom of this Author, examine how unhappy the greatest *English* Poets have been through their ignorance or negligence of these fundamental Rules and Laws of *Aristotle*. I shall leave the

Bellay.
P'asquier
prefers him
to the best
of *Italy*.

Author of the *Romance of the Rose* (whom Sir *Richard Baker* makes an *Englishman*) for the *French* to boast of, because he writ in their Language. Nor shall I speak of *Chaucer*, in whose time our Language, I presume, was not capable of any Heroick Character. Nor indeed was the most polite Wit of *Europe* in that Age sufficient for a great design. That was the Age of *Tales, Ballads, and Roundelays*. *Petrarch* in those days attempted the *Epick* strain in his *Africa*; but though most happy in his *Sonnets* and *Madrigals*, was far too feeble for a work of that weight and importance.

Spencer, I think, may be reckon'd the first of our *Heroick Poets*; he had a large spirit, a sharp judgment, and a *Genius* for *Heroick Poesie*, perhaps above any that ever writ since *Virgil*. But our misfortune

The Preface of the Translator.

tune is, he wanted a true *Idea*; and lost himself, by following an unfaithful guide. Though besides *Homer* and *Virgil* he had read *Tasso*, yet he rather suffer'd himself to be misled by *Ariosto*; with whom blindly rambling on *marvellous* Adventures, he makes no Conscience of *Probability*. All is fanciful and chimerical, without any uniformity, without any foundation in truth; his Poem is perfect *Fairy-land*.

They who can love *Ariosto*, will be ravish'd with *Spencer*; whilst men of juster thoughts lament that such great Wits have miscarried in their Travels for want of direction to set them in the right way. But the truth is, in *Spencer's* time, *Italy* it self was not well satisfied with *Tasso*; and few amongst them would then allow that he had excell'd their *divine Ariosto*. And it was the vice of those Times to affect superstitiously the *Allegory*; and nothing would then be currant without a mystical meaning. We must blame the *Italians* for debauching great *Spencer's* judgment; and they cast him on the unlucky choice of the *Stanza*, which in no wise is proper for our Language.

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The Preface of the Translator.

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The Preface of the Translator.

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The Preface of the Translator.

liam D'avenant, his Wit is well known; and in the Preface to his *Gondibert*, appear some strokes of an extraordinary judgment. He is for *unbeaten tracks*, and *new wayes of thinking*; but certainly in his *untry'd Seas* he is no great discoverer.

One design of the *Epick Poets* before him was to adorn their own Countrey, there finding their *Heroes*, and patterns of Virtue; *Et Pater Æneas & Avunculus excitet Hector.* whose example (as they thought) would have greatest influence and power over Posterity; but this Poet steers a different course, his *Heroes* are all Forreigners: He cultivates a Countrey that is nothing akin to him, 'tis *Lombardy* that reaps the honour of all.

Other Poets chose some *Action* or *Heroe* so illustrious, that the name of the Poem prepared the Reader, and made way for its reception: but in this Poem none can divine, what *great action* he intended to celebrate; nor is the Reader obliged to know whether the *Heroe* be *Turk* or *Christian*. Nor do the first lines give any light or prospect into his *design*. Methinks, though his Religion could not dispense with an *Invocation*, he need-
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The Preface of the Translator.

ed not have scrupled at the *Proposition*: yet he rather chooses to enter in at the top of an house, because the mortals of *mean* and *satisfied minds* go in at the door. And I believe the Reader is not well pleas'd to find his Poem begin with the praises of *Aribert*, when the Title had promised a *Gondibert*. But before he falls on any other business, he presents the Reader with a description of each particular *Heroe*, not trusting their *actions* to speak for them; as former Poets had done. Their practice was fine and artificial, his (he tells us) is a *new way*. Many of his *Characters* have but little of the *Heroick* in them; *Dalga* is a Jilt, proper onely for *Comedy*; *Birtha* for a *Pastoral*; and *Astragon*, in the manner here described, yields no very great ornament to an *Heroick Poem*; nor are his Battels less liable to Censure, than those of *Homer*.

He dares not, as other *Heroick Poets*, heighten the *action* by making Heaven and Hell interest'd, for fear of offending against *probability*; and yet he tells of

— *Threads by patient Parcæ slowly spun.*

And

The Preface of the Translator.

And for being dead, his phrase is,

*"Heaven call'd him, where peacefully he
rules a Star.*

And the *Emerald* he gives to *Birthe*, has a stronger tang of the old Woman, and is a greater *improbability* than all the enchantments in *Tasso*. A just *medium* reconciles the farthest extremes, and due preparation may give credit to the most unlikely Fiction. In *Marino*, *Adonis* is presented with a *Diamond Ring*, where, indeed, the stone is much what of the same nature; but this Present is made by *Venus*: and from a *Goddeſs* could not be expected a gift of ordinary virtue.

Although a Poet is oblig'd to know all Arts and Sciences, yet he ought discreetly to manage this knowledge. He must have judgment to select what is noble or beautiful, and proper for his occasion. He must by a particular Chymistry extract the essence of things, without soiling his Wit with the gross and trumpery. But some Poets labour to appear skilful with that wretched affectation, they dote on the very terms and jargon: exposing themselves rather to be laught

The Preface of the Translator.

taught at by the Apprentices, than to be admir'd by Philosophers: But whether *D'Avenant* be one of those, I leave others to examine.

The sort of Verse he makes choice of, might, I suppose, contribute much to the vitiating of his stile; for thereby he obliges himself to stretch every period to the end of four lines. Thus the sense is broken perpetually with *parentheses*, the words jumbld in confusion, and a darkness spread over all; that the sense is either not discern'd, or found not sufficient for one just Verse, which is sprinkld on the whole *tetrastick*.

In the *Italian* and *Spanish*, where all the *Rimes* are dissyllable, and the percussion stronger, this kind of Verse may be necessary; and yet to temper that grave march, they repeat the same Rime over again, and then they close the *Stanza* with a *Complet* further to sweeten the severity. But in *French* and *English*, where we rime generally with onely one syllable, the *Stanza* is not allow'd, much less the *alternate* Rime in long Verse; for the sound of the monosyllable Rime is either lost ere we come to its correspondent, or we are in pain

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The Preface of the Translator.

by the so long expectation and suspense.

This alternate Rime, and the downright Morality throughout whole *Canto's* together, shew him better acquainted with the *quatrains of Pybrach*, which he speaks of, than with any true Models of *Epick Poesie*.

After all, he is said to have a particular Talent for the *Manners*: his thoughts are great, and there appears something *roughly Noble* throughout this fragment; which, had he been pleased to finish it, would, doubtless, not have been left so open to the attack of Criticks.

A more happy *Genius* for *Heroick Poesie*, appears in *Cowley*. He understood the *purity*, the *perspicuity*, the *majesty* of *stile*, and the vertue of *numbers*. He could discern what was beautiful and pleasant in Nature, and could express his Thoughts without the least difficulty or constraint. He understood to dispose of the matters, and to manage his Digressions. In short, he understood *Homer* and *Virgil*, and as prudently made his advantage of them.

Yet

The Preface of the Translator.

Yet as it may be lamented, that he carried not on the work so far as he design'd, so it might be wish'd that he had lived to revise what he did leave us: I think the *Troubles of David* is neither title nor matter proper for an *Heroick Poem*; seeing it is rather the *actions*, than his sufferings, that make an *Heroe*: nor can it be defended by *Homer's Odysseis*, since *Ulysses's* sufferings conclude with one great and perfect action.

After all the heavy Censures that jointly from all Criticks have fall'n on *Lucan*, I do a little wonder that this Author should choose *History* for the Subject of his Poem; and a History where he is so strictly ty'd up to the Truth. *Aristotle* tells us, That Poetry is something more excellent, and more philosophical, than History, and does not inform us what has been done, but teaches what may, and what ought to be done. And since many particulars in Sacred Story are neither *Heroick*, nor indeed consistent with the common principles of Morality, but of a singular, extraordinary, and unaccountable dispensation; and since in the principal actions all is carried on by *Machine*; how can these

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The Preface of the Translator.

these examples be propos'd for great persons to imitate? or what foundation for their hopes in *impossibilities*? Poetry has no life, nor can have any operation without *probability*: it may indeed amuse the People, but moves as the Courtiers, not the *Wise*, for whom alone (according to *Pythagoras*) it is ordain'd.

Instead of one *illustrious* and *perfect* action, which properly is the subject of an *Epick* Poem; *Cowley* proposes to adorn some several particulars of *David's* life: and these particulars have no necessary relation to the end, nor in any wise lead to the great revolution; *David* is made King, but this is the work of Heaven, not any atchievement of his own. He neither did, nor ought to lift a finger for gaining the Crown: he is amongst the *Amalekites*, whilst his work is done without him. This ill choice of a Subject forces the Poet (how excellent otherwise soever) perpetually on digressions: and *David* is the least part of the Poem.

Some, perhaps, may object, That he begins not his Poem with all the art and address as might be desired. Homer would make

The Preface of the Translator.

make us believe the drawing of *Achilles*, adorn'd with all his glorious actions, a design too vast and impossible; and therefore only proposes his *resentment* of the affront given him by *Agamemnon*; as if any one particular of his life were sufficient to employ the greatest humane Wit with all its *Muses* and divine assistance. *Achilles* could not be angry, but Heaven and Earth are engaged, and just matter given for an *Heroick* Poem. Thus whilst he *proposes* but one passage, we conceive a greater *Idea* of the rest than any words could express; and whilst he promises so little, his performances are the more admirable and surprising. But in the *Davideis* we have all the *Heroe* at the first: in the Proposition, he is the *best Poet*, and the *best King*; now all the Author could do afterwards, is onely to make good his word, and make us conceive of his *Heroe* the same *Idea* at the end of the Poem, which was given us in the beginning; whereas *Homer* calls the man he designs to celebrate barely *Achilles*, son of *Peleus*, and recording his actions, leaves others to conclude from them what a great *Captain*, *Prince* and *Heroe* this *Achilles* was.

The Preface of the Translator.

Tasso left the *Episode of Sophonia* out of his Poem, because it was *Troppo Lyrico*.

Yet Mr. Cowley is not content to mix matters that are purely *lyrical* in this *Heroick Poem*; but employs the *measures* also.

Yet, notwithstanding what has been said, we cannot now approve the reason (which Sir *Philip Sidney* gives) why Poets are less esteem'd in *England*, than in the other famous Nations, to be want of merit: nor be of their opinion, who say, that *Wit* and *Wine* are not of the growth of our Countrey. Valour they allow us; but what we gain by our Arms, we lose by the weakness of our Heads: our good *Ale*, and English *Beef*, they say, may make us *Soldiers*; but are no very good Friends to *Speculation*. Were it proper here to handle this Argument, and to make comparisons with our Neighbors, it might easily, by our *Poetry* be evinced, that our *Wit* was never inferior to theirs, though, perhaps, our *honesty* made us worse Polititians. *Wit* and *Valor* have alwayes gone together, and *Poetry* been the companion of Camps. The *Heroe* and *Poet* were inspired with the same Enthusiasm, acted with

The Preface of the Translator.

with the same heat, and both were crown'd with the same *laurel*. Had our Tongue been as generally known, and those who felt our blows, understood our Language; they would confess that our Poets had likewise done their part, and that our Pens had been as successful as our Swords. And certainly if Sir *Philip Sidney* had seen the Poets who succeeded him, he would not have judg'd the *English* less deserving than their Neighbors. In the *Davidis* (fragment and imperfect as it is) there shines something of a more fine, more free, more new, and more noble *air*, than appears in the *Hierusalem* of *Tasso*, which for all his care, is scarce perfectly purg'd from *Pedantry*. But in the *Lyrick* way however, *Cowley* far exceeds him, and all the rest of the *Italians*: though *Lyrick Poessie* is their principal glory, and Pope *Urban VIII*, had the honour a little before him to enrich modern *Poessie* with the *Pindarick* strains. Many the greatest Wits of *France* have attempted the *Epick*, but their performance answer'd not expectation; our fragments are more worth than their finish'd pieces. And though, perhaps, want of encouragement has hinder'd our labours in the *Epic*, yet

The Preface of the Translator,

for the *Drama*, the World has nothing to be compared with us. But a debate of this importance is not the work of a Preface: I shall only here on the behalf of our *English Poetry*, give one single instance, and leave the Reader to judge of *Hercules* by his foot.

Amongst the common places (by which *Scaliger*, and before him *Macrobius*, *Agellius*, and the other Criticks have compared the Poets, and examin'd their worth) none has been more generally, and more happily handled, and in none have the Noblest wits both *ancient* and *modern* more contended with each other for victory, than in the *description of the right*. Yet in this the *English* has the advantage, and has even outdone them where they have outdone themselves. The first, I meet with, who had the *lucky hit*, is *Apollonius* in his *Argonautiques*.

Νῆξ δὲν ἔπειτ' ὅππ' ἤσαν ἄγαν κρύφας, οἶδ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
 Νύξαι εἰς ἐλίκητ' ἢ ἀέρας αἰώνῳ
 Ἐῖρα καὶ δὴ νῶν, ὅτιοι τῇ καὶ τίς ὁδὸς
 Ἥδη καὶ πύλας ἐέλδοτο, καὶ τίνα παῖδ' αὖ
 Μίτρα πεδιότων ἀδινὸν περὶ κῶμ' ἐκαλυπτοί.
 Οὐδὲ κινῶν ὑλακὴ' εἰ' ἀνὰ πτόλι, δ' ἀρῶν ἦεν
 Ἥρως, σιγῇ δὲ μελαινομένην ἔχεν ὄρον.
 Ἀλλὰ μὲν δ' ἠμείλιαν ὅππ' ἡλυκὸς λάβεν ὕπνῳ.

Here we have variety of matter, yet rather *many*, than *choice* thoughts. He gives

The Preface of the Translator:

gives us the face of things both by Land and Sea, City and Countrey, the Mariner, the Traveller, the Door-keeper, the Mistress of the Family, her Child and Dog; but loses himself amongst his particulars, and seems to forget for what occasion he mentions them. He would say that all the world is fast asleep but onely *Medea*; and then his Mariners, who are gazing from their ships on *Helice* and *Orion*, can serve but little for his purpose; unless they may be supposed to sleep with their eyes open. Neither dares he say that the *Traveller* and *Porter* are yet taking a Nap, but onely that they have a good mind to't. And after all, we find none but the good Woman who had lost her Child (and she indeed is fast) asleep, unless the Dogs may likewise be supposed so, because they had left off barking. And these, methinks, were scarce worthy to be taken notice of in an *Heroick Poem*, except we may believe that in the *old time*, or that in *Greek* they bark Heroically. *Scaliger*, as his manner is, to prefer *Virgil*, calls this description *mean* and *vulgar*. *Virgil* well saw the levity and trifling of the *Greeks*, and from him we may expect something better digested.

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The Preface of the Translator.

Nox erat, & placidum carpebant fessâ soporem
Corpora per terras, sylvæque & sæva quierant
Æquora, cum Medio voluntur sydera lapsu :
Cum tacet omnis ager, pecudes piæque volucres
Quæque lacus late liquidos, quæque aspera dumis
Rura tenent, somno posita sub nocte silenti
Lenibant curas, & corda oblita laborum.

[*Æn.* l. 4.]

Against this may be objected, That sleep being of such a soft and gentle nature, that 'tis said to steal upon our senses, the word [*carpebant*] suits but ill with it; this word seeming to imply a force, and might rather express the violence of Robbers, than the slieness of a Thief. Nor can it be pretended that [*sopor*] signifies a kind of violent and snoring sleep, for here we have it *placidum soporem*. Instead of *Woods* and *Seas*, Tasso rather chooses to join *Winds* and *Seas*, as of a nearer relation, and going more naturally together; the Commentators being certainly mistaken, who would have a *Metonymie* in this place. The third Verse I can scarce believe legitimate: the words speak nothing but motion, and the numbers are so rattling, that nothing can be more repugnant to the general repose and silence

The Preface of the Translator.

lence which the Poet describes : or , if any Copies might favour the conjecture, I should rather read

— *Cum medio librantur sydera cursu.*

For nothing can be more Poetical , than to suppose the Stars rest (as it were poiz'd) in their Meridian ; and this would not only expresse it to be Midnight , but heighten the Poets design, which by the common reading is absolutely destroy'd. The fifth line seems to bear a doubtful face, and looks not unlike something of equivocation : an ordinary *Grammarian* would seek no further than the *antecedent* [*vulcres*] to refer these *relatives* to ; and might construe Wild ducks, and Woodcocks, what the Poet intended for *Fish* in the Sea, and the *wild Beasts* of the Forest.

Besides this, I find none amongst the *Latins* that deserves to be brought into comparilon. In the *Italian*, *Ariosto* (whose every description is said to be a *master-piece*) in this is not over-fortunate ; he is easie and smooth, but produces nothing of his own invention. He only enlarges on a thought of *Virgils* ; which yet he leaves without that *turn* which might

The Preface of the Translator.

might give it perfection. What I think is more considerable, is this of *Tasso*.

*Era la notte all'hor, ch' alto riposo
Han l'onde, e i venti, e pareva muto il mondo:
Gli animai lassi, e quei, che 'l mar ondofo,
O de' liquidi laghi alberga il fondo,
E chi si giace in tana, o in mandra ascoso,
E i pinti augelli ne l' oblio profondo,
Sotto il silentio de' secreti horri,*
Sopian gli affanni, e raddolciano i cori.

Tasso, when he reform'd his Poem, could mend nothing in this description, but repeats it entire in his *Hierusalem liberata*, without any alteration. 'Tis well nigh word for word taken out of *Virgil*, and (to give it its due) is a most excellent Translation. He most judiciously leaves out that Hemistick, *voluntar sydera lapsu*, the place whereof is (perhaps from *Statius*)

Achilleidos l. 1. *mutusq; ample-* supply'd with *parea muto*
titur orbem. *il mondo.* Yet on the other

hand, here seems to be some superfluity of Fish: those in the Sea, and those at the bottom of the Lakes, are more by half than *Virgil*, or, perhaps than *Tasso* had occasion for in this place.

But that we may have something new from the *Italians* on this Subject,

Marino

The Preface of the Translator.

Marino has taken care in his Adonis, Canto 13.

*Notte era, allhor che dal diurno moto
Ha requie ogni pensier, tregna ogni duolo,
L'onde giacean, tacean zefiro, e Noto,
E cedeva il quadrante a l'horivolo,
Sopra l'huom la fatica, il pesce il nuoto,
La fera il Corso, e l'angelletto il volo.
Aspettando il tornar del novo lume
Tra l'alghe, o tra rami, o su le pinne.*

In these we have more of the *fancy*, than of the *judgment*; variety of matter, rather than exquisite sense. *Marino* is perfectly himself throughout; the *thoughts diurnal motion*, I fear, will scarce pass for a very pathetic expression, nor will it satisfy, that he makes *Zephyrus* and the *South-wind* silent; if he particularize these, he should also name the rest, otherwise the *East-wind* and *Boreas* have leave to bluster. But, above all, he tells us that the *Clocks* have got the better of the *Sun-dials*. A thought purely New, and strangely Heroick. What could come more sudden or surprising? in the latter part of the *Stanza*, we have some strokes of *Ariosto*, but far more lame and imperfect than the original. Neither ought he in this place

The Preface of the Translator.

to speak of any expecting the return of the light; *omnia noctis crant.*

But I hasten to the *French*, amongst whom none more eminent than *Chaplain*, nor was ever a Poem of greater expectation. His description is thus:

*Cependant la nuit vole, & sous son aile obscure
Invite a sommeiller l'agissante Nature.
Dans les plains des airs tient les vents en repose,
Et sur les champs sales fait reposer les flots,
A tout ce qui se meut, a tout ce qui respire
Dans les pres, dans les bois le repos elle inspire,
Elle suspend par tout les travaux & les bruits,
Et par tout dans les cœurs assoupit les ennuis.
Charles seul esveille----*

This description is perfect *French*. There is scarce any coming at a little sense, 'tis so encompassed about with words. What *Virgil* or *Tasso* would have dispatch'd in half a Verse, here fills out the measures of two whole *Alexandrins*.

Some Caviller would object, That since the *Night* flies, there is little sleep to be got under *her wing*, unless for such as can walk in their sleep. And that the *Night* might have spared this invitation, seeing those she invites are asleep already: *Charles alone is awake*, and for that reason,

The Preface of the Translator.

reason, was the onely thing fit to be invited; and doubtless the *Night* was as free of her *invitation* to him, as to any others, 'twas his fault that he had no stomach to't. And here is much power given to the *Night*, which she has no claim or title to: 'tis not the *Night* that makes the *Waves and Winds*, and all the things that *move and breath in Meads and Woods* to *repose*. She onely invites them to sleep, and it is sleep that makes them rest. In the space of four lines, we meet with *repos*, *reposer*, *repos*, which argue the language very barren, or else the Poet extremely negligent, and a lover of repose. He tells us, that the *Night inspires repose*. But certainly motion is a more likely thing to be inspired, than rest, as more properly the effect of breath.

But without examining this further, let us try if *Le Moyne* (whom our Critick prefers before all others of the *French Epick Poets*) be more fortunate.

*Cependant le soleil se couche dans son lit,
Que luy mesme de pourpre & de laque embellit:
Et la nuit qui survient aussi triste que sombre,
De toute les couleurs ne fait que une grand' ombre;*

Aveque

The Preface of the Translator.

*Aveque le sommeil le silence la suit,
L'un amy du repos, l'autre ennemy du bruit;
Et quoique sous leur pas la tempeste se taise,
Quoique le vent s'endorme & que l'onde s'appaise:*

[St. Louys.]

Here again are words in abundance. He cannot tell us that 'tis Midnight, till he first have informed us that *the Sun is gone to Bed*, to a fine Bed of *his own trimming*: and this is matter enough for the first two Verses. Then we are told, that the *Night of all Colours makes but one great shade*, and this suffices for the second *Complet*. *Aussi triste que sombre*, is an expression the French are so delighted with, they can scarce name any thing of Night without it. The third *Complet* is much-what as in a *Bill of Fare*:

*Item—Beef and Mustard,
That Friend to th' Stomach, this a Foe to
th' Nose.*

The second line in both being alike impertinent.

Any further *Reflections*, or more examples would be superfluous. What has been noted, rather concerns the Niceties of *Poetry*, than any the little trifles
of

The Preface of the Translator.

of Grammar. We have seen what the noblest Wits both ancient and modern have done in other Languages, and observ'd that in their very Master-pieces they sometimes trip, or are how-^{ever} liable to Cavils. It now remains that our *English* be expos'd to the like impartial Censure.

*All things are hush'd, as Nature's self lay dead,
The Mountains seem to Nod their drowsie head,
The little Birds in dreams their Songs repeat,
And sleeping flowers beneath the Night-dew sweat,
Even Lust and Envy sleep.*

[In the Conquest of *Mexico*.]

In this description, four lines yield greater variety of matter, and more choice thoughts than twice the number of any other Language. Here is something more *fortunate* than the boldest fancy has yet reached, and something more *just*, than the severest reason has observed. Here are the *fighths* of *Statius* and *Marino* temper'd with a more discerning judgment, and the *judgment* of *Virgil* and *Tasso* animated with a more sprightly Wit. Nothing has been said so expressive and so home in any other Language as the first Verse in this description,

b

The Preface of the Translator.

scription. The second is *Statius* improv'd.

Et simulant fessos curvata cacumina somnos.

Saith *Statius*, where *simulant* is a bold word in comparison of our *English* word *seem*, being of an active signification; and *cacumina* may as well be taken for the tops of Trees, as the tops of Mountains, which doubtful meaning does not so well content the Reader, as the certainty.

In the *third* Verse, 'tis not said that the Birds sleep, but what is more new, and more Poetical, their sleep is imply'd, by their dreams. Somewhat like to the *Fourth* we have in *Marino*.

————— *E languidetti i fiori*
Giaceano a l'herba genitrice in seno.

[Adonis Canto 20.]

Which is a pretty image, but has not so near a resemblance with truth, nor can so generally be apply'd to all flowers. Our Author here dares not say directly that the flowers sleep, which might sound a little harsh, but flurs it over in the *participle*, as taken for granted,

The Preface of the Translator.

ed, and affirms only that they sweat, which the *Night-dew* makes very easie.

In the last Half-verse, we may see how far our Author has out-done *Apollonius*. 'Twas no such strange thing in the sorrowful Woman when she had spent her tears, for sleep to close her eyes: but here we have the most raging and watchful passions *Lust* and *Envy*. And these too instead of the lustful and the envious, for the greater force and emphasis, in the *abstract*.

Some may object, That the *third* Verse does contradict the *first*. How can all things be hush'd, if *Birds in dreams repeat their Songs*? Is not this like the indiscretion of *Marino*, who says, *That the Winds and all things are hush'd, and the Seas so fast asleep, that they snore.* [Canto 20.]

It may be answer'd, That in this place 'tis not the Poet that speaks, but another person; and that the Poet here truly represents the nature of man, whose first thoughts break out in bold and more general terms, which by the second thoughts are more correct and limited. As if one should say, all things are silent, or asleep however; if there

The Preface of the Translator.

is any noise, 'tis still but the effect of
sleep, as the dreams of Birds, &c. This
comparison might be much further im-
proved to our advantage, and more ob-
servations made, which are left to the
Readers ingenuity,

ADVER-

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Since it is not so much to instruct, as to exercise the Wits, that I make these Reflections publick; I am not so vain to think them necessary, nor yet humble enough to believe them altogether unprofitable. This Treatise is no New Model of Poesie; for that of Aristotle onely is to be adhered to, as the exactest Rule for governing the Wit. In effect this Treatise of Poesie, to speak properly, is nothing else, but nature put in method, and good sense reduc'd to principles. There is no arriving at perfection but by these Rules, and they certainly go astray that take a different course. What faults have not most of the Italian, Spanish, and other Poets fallen into, through their ignorance of these principles. And if a Poem made by these Rules fails of success, the fault lies not in the Art, but in the Artist; all who have writ of this Art, have followed no other Idea but that of Aristotle.

Horace was the first who propos'd this great Model to the Romans. And by this all the great men in the Court of Augustus form'd their Wits, who apply'd themselves to make Verse. Petronius (whom no man of modesty dares name, unless on the account of those directions he gave for writing)

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ting) amongst the Ordures of his Satyre, gives certain precepts for Poetry that are admirable. He is disgusted with the stile of Seneca and Lucan, which to him seem'd affected, and contrary to the principles of Aristotle. 'Tis at them he levels with those glances, that slip from him against the Poetasters, and false Declamators. Nothing more judicious was writ in those dayes, yet himself had not that easie and natural way, which he requires so much in others. He gives the best Rules in the World against affectation, which he never observes himself. For he commends even to the simplicity of stile, whereas his own is not alwayes natural. To say the truth, what is good on this Subject, is all taken from Aristotle, who is the onely source whence good sense is to be drawn, when one goes about to write.

We have had no Books of Poesie till this last Age; when that of Aristotle, with his other Works, were brought from Constantinople to Italy; where immediately appear'd a great number of Commentators, who writ upon this Book of Poesie: the chief whercof were Victorijs, Robortellus, Madius, who literally enough interpreted the Text of this Philosopher, without diving much into his meaning. These were followed by Castelvetro, Piccolomini, Beni,

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Beni, Riccobon, Majoragius, Minturnus, Vida, Patricius, Andre Gili, Vossius, and many others. But Vossius has commented on him meerly as a Scholiast, Gili as a Rhetorician, Patricius as an Historian, Vida as a Poet, who endeavours more to please, than to instruct; Minturnus as an Orator, Majoragius and Riccobon as Logicians, Beni as a Doctor who has a sound judgment when the honour of his Countrey is not concern'd. For he compares Ariosto with Homer, and Tasso with Virgil, in a Treatise made expressly on that Subject. Castelvetro and Piccolomini have acquitted themselves as able Criticks, and much better than the rest. Piccolomini deals with Aristotle more fairly than Castelvetro: who is naturally of a morose Wit, and out of a cross humor makes it alwayes his business to contradict Aristotle, and, for the most part, confounds the Text, instead of explaining it. Notwithstanding all this, he is the most subtle of all the Commentators, and the Man from whom most may be learned.

In fine, Lope de Vega was the onely person that undertook, on the good fortune of his old reputation, to hazard a new method of Poësie, which he calls *El Arte Nuevo*, wholly different from this of Aristotle. to
justifie

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justify the fabrick of his Comedies, which the Wits of his Countrey incessantly Criticiz'd upon; which Treatise succeeded so ill, that it was not judg'd worthy of a place amongst the rest, in the Collection of his Works, because he followed not Aristotle. Which I have precisely done in these Reflections: where I bring onely examples to confirm the Rules he gives us. And I take occasion to tell what we ought to judge of all those who have writ in Verse for more than these Two thousand years. I dispense with myself for speaking of those who are yet living: for I am not in humour to mount the Stage, and distribute Laurels; I had rather relie on the Publick; for the opinion we ought to have of their merit.

For the rest, I choose rather to write by way of Reflections, to avoid all those words which are necessary for Connexion in a continued Discourse. And since these Reflections may, peradventure, be offensive to some persons of a different Genius, I expect from them to hear of my mistakes, that I may make my profit thereof.

REFLECTIONS

(1)

REFLECTIONS
ON
ARISTOTLE'S TREATISE
OF
POESIE
In General.

I.



He true value of *Poe-*
try is ordinarily so lit-
tle known, that scarce
ever is made a true
judgment of it. 'Tis
the talent of wits on-
ly that are above the
common rank to esteem of it accord-
ing to its merit: and one cannot con-
sider, how *Alexander*, *Scipio*, ~~Julius~~ *Ce-*
sar, *Augustus*, and all the great men of
Antiquity have been affected therewith,
without conceiving a Noble Idea of it.
In effect, *Poesie*, of all Arts, is the most
perfect:

B

perfect : 'for the perfection of other Arts is limited, but this of *Poesie* has no bounds; to be excellent therein, one must know all things: but this value will best appear, by giving a particular of the qualities necessary for a Poet.

II.

HE must have a Genius extraordinary, great Natural gifts; a Wit just, fruitful, piercing, solid, universal; an Understanding clean and distinct; an Imagination neat and pleasant; an elevation of Soul that depends not on art nor study, and which is purely a gift of Heaven, and must be sustain'd by a lively sense and vivacity; a great Judgment to consider wisely of things, and a vivacity to express them with that grace and abundance which gives them beauty. But as Judgment without Wit is cold and heavy, so Wit without Judgment is blind and extravagant. Hence it is that *Lucan* often in his *Pharsalia* grows flat for want of Wit. And *Ovid* in his *Metamorphosis* sometimes loses himself through his defect of judgment. *Ariosto* has too much flame, *Dante* has none at all.

all. *Boccace's* wit is just, but not copious: the Cavalier *Marino* is luxuriant, but wants that justness; for in fine, to accomplish a Poet, is required a temperament of wit and of fancy, of strength and of sweetness, of penetration and of delicacy: and above all things, he must have a sovereign eloquence, and a profound capacity. These are the qualities that must concur together to form the Genius of a Poet, and sustain his Character.

III.

BUt the first injustice that Poets suffer, is, that commonly what is meerly the effect of Fancy, is mistaken for Wit. Thus an ignorant person shall start up, and be thought a Poet in the world, for a lucky hit in a Song or Catch, where is onely the empty flash of an imagination heated perhaps by a debauch, and nothing of that celestial fire which only is the portion of an extraordinary Genius. *One must be careful* (saith *Horace*) *of profaning that Name, by bestowing it without distinction on all those who undertake to versifie.* For (saith he) *there must be a greatness of Soul, and something divine*

in the spirit. There must be lofty expressions, and noble thoughts, and an air of majesty to deserve that name. A Sonnet, Ode, Elegy, Epigram, and those little kind of Verses that often make so much noise in the world, are ordinarily no more then the meer productions of imagination, a superficial wit, with a little conversation of the world is capable of these things. True Poetry requires other qualifications, a Genius for War, or for Business, comes nothing near it; a little flegm, with a competency of experience, may fit a man for an important Negotiation: and an opportunity well manag'd, joyn'd with a little hazard, may make the success of a Battel, and all the good fortune of a Campagne; but to excite these emotions of the Soul, and transports of admiration that are expected from Poetry, all the wit that the Soul of man is capable of, is scarce sufficient. For example.

IV.

Homer, who had a Genius accomplish'd for Poetry, had the vastest, sublimest, profoundest, and most universal

sal wit that ever was ; 'twas by his Po-
 ems that all the Worthies of Antiquity
 were form'd : from hence the Lawma-
 kers took the first platform of the Laws
 they gave to Mankind ; the founders of
 Monarchies and Commonwealths from
 hence took the Model of their Politicks.
 Hence the Philosophers found the first
 principals of Morality which they have
 taught the People. Hence Physicians
 have studied Diseases, and their Cures.
 Astronomers have learn'd the know-
 ledge of Heaven, and Geometricians of
 the Earth. Kings and Princes have
 learn'd the art to govern, and Captains
 to form a Battel to encamp an Army, to
 besiege Towns, to fight and to gain Vi-
 ctories. From this great original *Socra-*
tes, *Plato*, *Aristotle*, came to be Philoso-
 phers. *Sophocles* and *Euripides* took the
 haughty air of the Theatre and Idea's of
 Tragedy. *Zeuxes*, *Apelles*, *Polygnotus*,
 became such excellent Painters ; and
Alexander the Great so valiant. In fine,
Homer has been (if I may so say) the
 first Founder of all Arts and Sciences,
 and the pattern of the wise men in all
 Ages. And as he has been in some manner
 the Author of *Paganism*, the Religion
 whereof he establish'd by his Poems,

one may say that never Prophet had so many followers as he: yet notwithstanding this so universal Genius, this wit capable of all things, apply'd himself onely to *Poetry*, which he made his business.

V.

TIs in no wise true, what most believe, That some little mixture of Madness goes to make up the character of a Poet; for though his Discourse ought in some manner to resemble that of one inspir'd: yet his mind must alwayes be serene, that he may discern when to let his *Muse run mad*, and when to govern his Transports. And this serenity of spirit which makes the judgment, is one of the most essential parts of a Poets Genius, 'tis with this that he must be possess'd. *Aristotle* allows that there is something Divine in his character, but nothing of Madness. These the Vulgar alwayes confound, and 'tis their ignorance joyn'd with the extravagance of some particular Poets that made way for this opinion, to the disrespect of the profession, which is not consider'd in the world as it ought to be, by
reason

reason of the little care to distinguish those that are Poets, from those that are not.

V I.

ONE may be an Orator without the natural gift of Eloquence, because Art may supply that defect; but no man can be a Poet without a Genius: the want of which, no art or industry is capable to repair. This Genius is that celestial fire intended by the Fable, which enlarges and heightens the Soul, and makes it express things with a lofty air. Happy is he to whom Nature has made this present, by this he is raised above himself; whereas others are always low and creeping, and never speak but what is mean and common. He that hath a Genius, appears a Poet on the smallest Subjects, by the turn he gives them and the noble manner in which he expresses himself. This Character the French gave their *Monsieur Racan*, but in truth where shall we find all these qualities I have mentioned? where is that sparkling Wit and that solid Judgment? That flame and that flegm? That rapture and that moderation which con-

stitute that Genius we enquire after? 'tis the little Wits alwayes who think they versifie the best; the greatest Poets are the most modest. 'Twas with trembling that *Virgil* under the covert of the Night, went to fix on the gate of the Emperours Palace, those two Verses which caus'd so much admiration all over *Rome*. This great man conceal'd himself, when *Augustus* so earnestly made search after the Author of that admirable Distich, and he was the last that understood the value of his own work: 'tis certain that the great Wits never have a very good opinion of what they compose, by reason of the too great Idea of perfection they propose to themselves in their works. Happy Age, when Poets were so modest, when shall we see those days again! nothing is more troublesome than a Scribler conceited of his own Merit, he tyres all the world, eternally shewing his labours: and no sooner is he able to make a Rime at the end of a line, but all the world must be made to know his Talent; whereas the great men are in pain whil'st they shew themselves, and industriously labour to be conceal'd.

VII.

IT is not easily decided what the Nature, and what precisely is the End of this Art, the interpreters of *Aristotle* differ in their opinions. Some will have the End to be Delight, and that 'tis on this account it labours to move the passions, all whose motions are delightful, because nothing is more sweet to the Soul than agitation, it pleases it self in changing the objects, to satisfy the immensity of its desires. 'Tis true, delight is the end *Poetry* aims at, but not the principal end, as others pretend. In effect, *Poetry* being an Art, ought to be profitable by the quality of its own nature, and by the essential subordination that all Arts should have to Polity, whose end in general is the publick good. This is the judgment of *Aristotle*, and of *Horace*, his chief Interpreter.

VIII. After

VIII.

AFTER all, since the design of *Poetry* is to delight, it omits nothing that may contribute thereto; 'tis to this intent that it makes use of Numbers and Harmony, which are naturally delightful, and animates its Discourse with more lively draughts, and more strong expressions, than are allow'd in Prose; and does enfranchise it self from that constraint and reservedness that is ordinary with Orators, and permits a great liberty to imagination, and makes frequent images of what is most agreeable in nature; and never speaks but with figures, to give a greater lustre to the Discourse; and is noble in its Idea's, sublime in the Expressions, bold in the Words passionate in the Motions, and takes pleasure in relating extraordinary Adventures to give the most common and natural things a fabulous gloss, to render them more admirable, and heighten Truth by Fiction. 'Tis finally for this, that it employs whatever Art has that is pleasant, because its end is to delight. *Empedocles* who used not this art
in

in his Poems, as *Homer*, nor *Lucretius*, as *Virgil*. are not true Poets. *Homer* is delightful even in the description of *Laertes* *Swineherds* lodge in his *Odyssis*, and *Virgil* in the Dung and Thistles in his *Georgicks*, as he expresses himself; for every thing becomes beautiful and flowry in the hands of a Poet who hath a Genius.

I X.

HOWever the principal end of *Poesie*, is to profit; not only by refreshing the mind, to render it more capable of the ordinary functions, and by assuaging the troubles of the Soul with its harmony, and all the elegancies of expression. But furthermore, by purging the manners with wholsom instructions which it professes to administer to humane kind; for Virtue being naturally austere, by the constraint it imposes on the heart, in repressing the desires: Morality, which undertakes to regulate the motions of the heart by its precepts, ought to make it self delightful that it may be listened to, which can by no means be so happily effected as by *Poetry*: 'Tis by this, that Morality in curing

ring the Maladies of men, makes use of the same artifice that Physicians have recourse to in the sickness of children, they mingle Honey with the Medicine to take off the bitterness. The principal design therefore of this Art, is to render pleasant that which is wholsom; in which 'tis more wise then other Arts, which endeavour to profit without any care to please. Eloquence it self, by its most passionate Discourse, is not always capable to persuade men to Virtue with that success, as *Poetry*; because men are more sensible and sooner impress'd upon by what is pleasant, than by reason. For this cause, all *Poetry* that tends to the corruption of Manners, is irregular and vicious; and Poets are to be look'd on as a publick Contagion, whose Morals are not pure: and 'tis these dissolute and debauch'd Poets that *Plato* banish'd his Commonwealth. And true it is, that the petty Wits onely are ordinarily subject to say what is impious or obscene. *Homer* and *Virgil* were never guilty in this kind, they were sweet and virtuous as Philosophers; the Muses of true Poets are as chaste as *Vestals*.

X.

FOr no other end is *Poetry* delightful,
 then that it may be profitable. Plea-
 sure is only the means by which the pro-
 fit is convey'd ; and all *Poetry*, when 'tis
 perfect, ought of necessity to be a pub-
 lick Lesson of good Manners for the in-
 struction of the world. Heroick *Poe-
 sie* proposes the example of great Vir-
 tues, and great Vices, to excite men to
 abhor these, and to be in love with the
 other : it gives us an esteem for *Achil-
 les* in *Homer*, and contempt for *Thersites* :
 it begets in us a veneration for the piety
 of *Aeneas* in *Virgil*, and horreur for the
 profaness of *Mezentius*. Tragedy recti-
 fies the use of Passions, by moderating
 our fear, and our pity, which are obsta-
 cles of Virtue ; it lets men see that
 Vice never escapes unpunish'd, when it
 represents *Agisthus* in the *Electra* of *So-
 phocles*, punish'd after the Ten years en-
 joyment of his Crime. It teaches us,
 that the favours of Fortune, and the
 grandeurs of the World, are not al-
 ways true Goods, when it shews on the
 Theatre a Queen so unhappy as *Hecuba*
 deplo-

deploring with that pathetick ayre her misfortunes in *Euripides* Comedy, which is an image of common conversation, corrects the publick Vices, by letting us see how ridiculous they are in particulars. *Aristophanes* does not mock at the foolish vanity of *Praxagora* (in his *Parliament of Women*) but to cure the vanity of the other *Athenian Women*; and 'twas only to teach the *Roman Souldiers* in what consisted true Valour, that *Plantus* expos'd in publick the extravagance of false Bravery in his *Braggadocio Captain*, in that Comedy of the *Glorious Souldier*.

XI.

BUt because *Poetry* is only profitable so far as it is delightful, 'tis of greatest importance in this Art to please; the onely certain way to please, is by Rules: these therefore are to be established, that a Poet may not be left to confound all things, imitating those Extravagances which *Horace* so much blames; that is to say, by joining things naturally incompatible, *mixing Tygers with Lambs, Birds with Serpents, to make*

make one body of different species, and thereby authorize Fancies more indigested than the Dreams of sick men; for unless a man adhere to Principles, he is obnoxious to all Extravagances and Absurdities imaginable: unless he go by Rule, he slips at every step towards Wit, and falls into Errors as often as he sets out. Into what Enormities hath *Petrarch* run in his *Africa*; *Ariosto* in his *Orlando Furioso*; *Cavalier Marino* in his *Adonis*, and all the other *Italians* who were ignorant of *Aristotle's* Rules; and followed no other guides but their own Genius and capricious Fancy: Truth is, the Wits of *Italy* were so prepossess'd in favour of the *Romantick* Poetry of *Pulci*, *Boyardo*, and *Ariosto*, that they regarded no other Rules than what the heat of their Genius inspir'd. The first *Italian* Poet who let the World see that the Art was not altogether unknown to him, was *Giorgio Trissino* in his Poem of *Italy* delivered from the *Goths*, under the Pontificats of *Leo X.* and *Clement VIII.* in this Poem appear'd some kind of imitation of *Homers Ilias*. This Model was followed with success by *Tasso* in his *Hierusalem delivered*; though one *Oliviero* had essay'd the same before him,

him, but not so happily ; in his Poem of *Germany*, *Victorius*, *Madius*, *Robertellus*, and after them *Castelvetno*, and *Piccolomini* were the first that made *Europe* acquainted with *Aristotle's* Rules, which were brought over by the *Grecians* from *Constantinople* into *Italy* : and these were followed by *Beni*, *Minturno*, *Ricobon*, *Vida*, *Gallutio*, and many others.

XII.

A *Aristotle* drew the platform of these Rules from the Poems of *Homer*, and other Poets of his time, by the Reflections he had a long time made on their Works. I pretend not by a long Discourse to justify the necessity, the justness, and the truth of these Rules ; nor to make an History of *Aristotle's* Treatise of *Poesie* ; or examine whether it is complete, which many others have done, all these things I suppose: onely I affirm, That these Rules well considered, one shall find them made onely to reduce Nature into method, to trace it step by step, and not suffer the least mark of it to escape us. 'Tis onely by these Rules that the verisimilitude in Fictions is main-

maintained, which is the soul of *Poesie*. For unless there be the *unity* of *place*, of *time*, and of the *action* in the great Poems, there can be no *verisimilitude*. In fine, 'tis by these Rules that all becomes just, proportionate, and natural; for they are founded upon *good Sense*, and sound Reason, rather than on Authority and Example. *Horace's* book of *Poesie*, which is but an interpretation of that of *Aristotle*, discovers sufficiently the necessity of being subject to Rules, by the ridiculous Absurdities one is apt to fall into, who follows only his fancy; for though *Poesie* be the effect of fancy, yet if this fancy be not regulated, 'tis a meer *Caprice*, not capable of producing any thing reasonable.

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known without a long time making reflections on himself: and though Nature is always ready to discover it self, yet we are not to relie on that, but study it with great attention, to learn its strength. There are universal Genius's capable of all things by the immensity of their wit, as *Horace* and *Virgil*, and there are others that are limited. *Demetrius Phalereus* says, That *Archilochus* had not that greatness of Soul proper for an Heroick Poem, which *Homer* was endu'd withall. *Anacreon*, whose delicacy of Wit was admirable, had not that loftiness. *Propertius* affirms of himself, That he *was not fit to sing the Wars of Augustus, nor describe the Genealogy of Cæsar*. *Horace* per-adventure, by the strength of his Genius, might have been capable of a great Poem, if his inclination and nature had not determined him to Lyrick Verse. *Fracastorius*, who with so good success writ his *Syphilis*, the most excellent Poem in Latin Verse that these latter Ages has produc'd in *Italy*, and which is writ in imitation of *Virgil's Georgicks*, was not so happy in his Epick Poem of *Joseph Viceroy of Egypt*, a fragment whereof is extant; for this Poem is of a poor

deploring with that pathetick ayre her misfortunes in *Euripides*. Comedy, which is an image of common conversation, corrects the publick Vices, by letting us see how ridiculous they are in particulars. *Aristophanes* does not mock at the foolish vanity of *Praxagora* (in his *Parliament of Women*) but to cure the vanity of the other *Athenian Women*; and 'twas only to teach the *Roman Souldiers* in what consisted true Valour, that *Plautus* expos'd in publick the extravagance of false Bravery in his *Braggadocio Captain*, in that Comedy of the *Glorious Souldier*.

XI.

BUt because Poetry is only profitable so far as it is delightful, 'tis of greatest importance in this Art to please; the onely certain way to please, is by Rules: these therefore are to be established, that a Poet may not be left to confound all things, imitating those Extravagances which *Horace* so much blames; that is to say, by joining things naturally incompatible, *mixing Tygers with Lambs, Birds with Serpents, to make*

make one body of different species, and thereby authorize Fancies more indigested than the Dreams of sick men; for unless a man adhere to Principles, he is obnoxious to all Extravagances and Absurdities imaginable: unless he go by Rule, he slips at every step towards Wit, and falls into Errors as often as he sets out. Into what Enormities hath *Petrarch* run in his *Africa*; *Ariosto* in his *Orlando Furioso*; *Cavalier Marino* in his *Adonis*, and all the other *Italians* who were ignorant of *Aristotle's* Rules; and followed no other guides but their own Genius and capricious Fancy: Truth is, the Wits of *Italy* were so prepossess'd in favour of the *Romantick Poetry* of *Pulci*, *Boyardo*, and *Ariosto*, that they regarded no other Rules than what the heat of their Genius inspir'd. The first *Italian* Poet who let the World see that the Art was not altogether unknown to him, was *Giorgio Trissino* in his Poem of *Italy* delivered from the *Goths*, under the Pontificats of *Leo X.* and *Clement VIII.* in this Poem appear'd some kind of imitation of *Homers Iliad*. This Model was followed with success by *Tasso* in his *Hierusalem delivered*; though one *Oliviero* had essay'd the same before him,

him, but not so happily; in his Poem of *Germany*, *Victorius*, *Madius*, *Robertellus*, and after them *Castelvetno*, and *Piccolomini* were the first that made *Europe* acquainted with *Aristotle's* Rules, which were brought over by the *Grecians* from *Constantinople* into *Italy*: and these were followed by *Beni*, *Minturno*, *Ricobon*, *Vida*, *Gallutio*, and many others.

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Genius, and low Character. *Ronsard* who had a Talent for Lyrick Verse in *Scaliger's* opinion, and who got Reputation by his Odes, fell short extremely in his *Franciad*, which is dry and barren throughout, and has nothing of an Heroick ayre in it.

XV.

BUt 'tis not so much to discover its strength, that we must know our Genius, as that we may be diligent to form it by the help of Art, and not go astray in the way we take to bring it to perfection. 'Twas thus that *Horace*, whose Genius was capable of all things, chiefly applied himself to Satyre, by the inclination of his Natural gayety, which made him *Rallée* so pleasantly on all occasions. He had found in his Nature the seeds of this Character, which he afterwards cultivated with so much success: And what loftiness he found in his Nature, he confined to *Lyrick Poësie*, for which he had an Inclination. For though he had a Genius for greater things, yet by a certain love of ease, which was natural to him,

him, he only applied himself to the little, for that he was not of an humour to strain, or give himself trouble. *Ovid* finding in himself a capacity of expressing things naturally, left Heroick Verse to write Elegies, in which he was more happy. *Virgil*, who perceiv'd himself more strong, and had a greater elevation of Soul, took Trumpet in hand, and raised himself by his Eglogues, and Georgicks, as by so many steps to the most sublime Character of Heroick Verse. 'Tis therefore by reflecting a long time on a mans self, and by continual study of his Nature, join'd with the care and exercise of Composing, that he does accomplish his *Genius*, and arrives to perfection.

XVI.

Nothing can more contribute to this perfection, than a *judgment* proportion'd to the *Wit*; for the greater that the *Wit* is, and the more strength and vigour that the imagination has to form these Idea's that enrich *Poesie*; the more wisdom and discretion is requisite to moderate that heat, and govern its natural *Fury*. For Reason ought to be

much stronger than the Fancy, to discern how far the Transports may be carried. 'Tis a great Talent to forbear speaking all one thinks, and to leave something for others to employ their thoughts. 'Tis not ordinarily known how far matters should be carried; a man of an accomplish'd Genius stops regularly where he ought to stop, and retrenches boldly what ought to be omitted. 'Tis a great fault not to leave a thing when 'tis well, for which *Apelles* so much blam'd *Protogenes*. This moderation is the character of a great Wit, the Vulgar understand it not; and (what ever is alledg'd to the contrary) never any, save *Homer* and *Virgil*, had the discretion to leave a thing when 'twas well.

XVII.

THIS Natural discernment which is necessary for a Poet to accomplish him, ought it self to be improv'd, and to attain to perfection by the ministry of Art, without which, nothing exact or regular can be produc'd. A Poet that designs to write nothing but what is just and accurate, above all things ought to apply

apply himself with great attention to the precepts of *Aristotle* as the best Master that ever writ of this Art ; but because his method is nothing exact, though his matter be solid, I rather attend his Rules, than the order in which he has left them. *Horace*, who was the first Interpreter of *Aristotle*, in his Book on this Subject, has observ'd as little method, because peradventure it was writ in an Epistle, whose Character ought to be free, and without constraint. This is what may be said in general of subjecting the Wit to Rules of Art, which the *Italian* and *Spanish* Poets scarce ever were acquainted withall: hereafter follows what may be observ'd in particular of this Art.

XVIII.

THe Art of *Poetry* in general, comprehends the matters of which a Poet treats, and the manner in which he handles them ; the invention, the contrivance, the design, the proportion and symmetry of parts, the general disposition of matters, and whatever regards the invention, belong to the mat-

ters of which this Art ought to treat. The Fable, the Manners, the Sentiments, the Words, the Figures, the Numbers, the Harmony, the Versification regard the *manner* in which the matters are to be handled : So that the Art is (as it were) the instrument of the Genius, because it contains essentially all the different parts which are employ'd in the management. So that those who are furnish'd with a naked Wit onely, and who, to be great Poets, relie principally on their Fancy, as Cavalier *Marino* among the *Italians*, *Theophile* among the *French*, and those likewise who place the essence of *Poetry* in big and pompous words, as *Statius* among the *Latins*, and *Du Bartas* among the *French*, are much mistaken in their account, when they aspire to the glory of *Poetry* by such feeble means.

XIX.

AMong the particulars of this Art, the Subject and *Design* ought to have the first place, because it is, as it were, the first production of the Wit; and the design in a Poem is, what they call

call the *Ordonnance* in a picture. The great Painters onely are capable of a great design in their draughts, such as a *Raphael*, a *Julius Romanus*, a *Poussin*, and onely great Poets are capable of a great Subject in their *Poetry*. An indifferent Wit may form a vast design in his Imagination, but it must be an extraordinary Genius that can work this design, and fashion it according to justness and proportion. For 'tis necessary that the same spirit reign throughout, that all contribute to the same end, and that all the parts bear a secret relation to each other, all depend on this relation and alliance; and this general design is nothing else but the *form* which a Poet gives to his work. This also is the most difficult part, being the effect of an accomplish'd judgment, and because judgment is not the ordinary Talent of the *French*, 'tis generally in the contrivance of their design, that their Poets are defective, and nothing is more rare among them, than a design that is great, just, and well conceiv'd. They pretend to be more happy in the Talents of Wit and Fancy, as likewise the *Italians*. The most perfect design of all modern Poems, is that of *Tasso*, nothing more complete

plete has appear'd in *Italy*, though great faults are in the conduct of it. And the most judicious, the most admirable, the most perfect design of all Antiquity, is that of *Virgil* in his *Aeneads*; all there is great and noble, all proportionable to the Subject, which is the establishment of the Empire of *Rome*, to the *Heroe* who is *Aeneas*, to the glory of *Augustus* and the *Romans*, for whom it was compos'd. Nothing is weak or defective in the execution, all there is happy, all is just, all is perfect. But the sovereign perfection of a design, in the opinion of *Horace*, is to be simple, and that all turn on the same Centre. Which is so true, that even in little things, that is to say, in an *Eglogue*, *Elegy*, *Song* or *Epigram*, and in the meanest Compositions there ought to be a just cast, and that all of it turn on the same point. *Ovid* did much violence to himself to unite his *Metamorphoses*, and close them in one design, in which he was not altogether so happy, as afterwards in his *Elegies*, where well nigh alwayes one may find a certain turn which binds the design, and makes thereof a work that is just by the dependance and relation of its parts. In this the ancient Poets were
alwayes

alwayes more exact than the modern ;
 for most of the modern express their
 thoughts *biggle piggle*, without any
 Order or Connexion. If there be
 design, 'tis never with that scrupulous
 unity, which is the principal virtue that
 should be predominant, to make it just
 and complete. I know there are a kind
 of works which, by the quality of their
 Character, ought to be writ with a free
 ayre, without other design than that of
 writing things naturally, and without
 constraint, such are the Hymns of *Orphe-
 us*, *Homer*, *Callimachus* ; and such are cer-
 tain Odes of *Pindar*, *Anacreon*, and *Ho-
 race*, that have no other Rule but En-
 thusiasm : and such likewise are the
 most part of the Elegies of *Tibullus* and
Propertius. But it must be granted, that
 these are not the best and most beauti-
 ful's, and who reflects on the Elegies of
Ovid, shall alwayes there perceive a se-
 cret turn which makes the design, and
 this is ordinarily the principal beauty in
 these little works of Verse, as may be
 seen in most Epigrams of the Antholo-
 gy, in those of *Catullus*, in the *correct*
 Odes of *Horace*, and in the Phalensia-
 cks of *Bonifons*, who within this last
 Age, has writ in Latin Verse with all the
 soft-

softness and delicacy possible. Thus every sort of *Poesie* ought to have its proportionable design; a great design, in great Poems; and in little, a little design: But of this, the ordinary Wits know nothing; their Works, which generally are meer productions of Imagination, have scarce ever any design, unless it be by chance. It must be the work of an accomplish'd Genius, to close his thoughts in a design, whence results an agreement and proportion of parts, that makes the harmony perfect.

XX.

THE *design* of a Poem must consist of two Parts, of Truth, and of Fiction; Truth is the foundation, Fiction makes the accomplishment. And *Aristotle* calls the mixture of these two, the *constitution of things*: or the *Fable*, which is no other than the subject of a Poem, as the Design or Fable of the *Andria* in *Terence*, are the Loves of *Pamphilus* and *Glycerium*. The Fable of *Hyppolitus* in *Euripides*, is the passion of, *Phædra* for her Son-in-law; this passion causes the misfortunes of *Hyppolitus*,

politus, and the disorders of *Theseus's* house. The Fable of *Homer's Iliad* is the anger of *Achilles*, who by his presence, or by his absence from the *Grecian* Army, determines the good or ill success of all his party; the anger of this Prince, which proceeds of the discontent he received from *Agamemnon*, is the truth of the History, which is adorn'd with all the *Episodes* and variety of Adventures that enrich this Poem: and the Poet fills not his Poem with that variety of extraordinary Events, but to give delight; which he could never perform, if he had nothing to say but truth; and he would never be regarded, if all were fabulous: therefore *History* and *Fiction* must necessarily enter the composition of the Subject.

XXI.

A *Aristotle* divides the Fable, which serves for Argument to a Poem, into simple and compound. The simple is that which hath no change of Fortune, as is the *Prometheus* of *Eschylus*, and the *Hercules* of *Seneca*. The compound Fable is that which hath a turn
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from bad Fortune to good, or from good to bad, as the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles*. And the contrivance of each Fable must have two parts, the *Intrigue*, and the *Discovery*. The *Intrigue* embroyles matters, casting troubles and confusion among the Affairs. The *Discovery* remits all into a calm again. Whatever goes before the change of Fortune, is call'd the *Intrigue*; all that makes the change, or follows it, is the *Discovery*. The *Intrigue* in the *Andromache* of *Euripides*, is, that this Princess, after she had lost *Hector* her Husband, had seen her Father *Priam* murder'd, the chief City of his Kingdom burnt, became a slave to *Neoptolemus*. *Hermione* the Wife of this Prince, prick'd with jealousy against *Andromache*, was minded to kill her. *Menelaus* Father of *Hermione*, causes her with her son *Astyanax* to be drag'd to execution; this is the *Intrigue*. Now she is rescu'd from death by *Tethys* and *Peleus*, who prefer the Son to be King of the *Molossians*, and the Mother to be Queen by a Marriage with *Heleus*; this is the *Discovery*. And every Fable must have these two parts, to be the subject of a just Poem. Thus *Aeneas* chac'd from his

his Countrey, spoil'd of all that he possess'd, beaten by Tempests, wandring from Coast to Coast, destitute of all Succours, persecuted by *Juno*, and the other Deities of her *Cabal*; After all these disgraces, became the Founder of the greatest Monarchy in the world, This is the Fable of the *Æneid* with its Intrigue, and its Discovery. And it is to be observ'd, that only by this change of Fortune the Fable pleases, and has its effect, in which the simple Fable is defective in *Aristotle's* opinion, because it wants variety.

XXII.

F*able* is so essential to *Poetry*, that there is no *Poetry* without it; it is the form and the distinction; for the Fable to a Poem, is what the Figure is to Marble in a Statue: but the Fable, besides the two parts already mention'd that compose it, must yet have two qualities to be perfect; it must be *admirable*, and it must be *probable*. By the first of these qualities it becomes worthy of admiration, and by the second it becomes worthy of belief. However admirable

mirable the Fable be, it can have no effect unless it be probable. The truth is, it strikes the Soul, because it is extraordinary, but it never enters, nor can make any impression, by reason it appears incredible. Probability alone is too faint and *dull* for Poetry, and what is only admirable, is too *dazzling*. 'Tis true, whatever appears incredible, is strongly *relish'd* by the curiosity of the people; for the People, saith *Synesius*, despises whatever seems common and ordinary; they love nothing but what is prodigious, but the *Wise* cannot endure what is incredible; the publick being compos'd of the one and the other, is delighted with what is admirable, so be, it is credible: therefore it most imports to know so to mingle these in such a just temperament as may please the fancy without shocking the reason; but to learn this secret, it must be known what it is to be *admirable*, and what it is to be *probable*.

XXIII:

THe *admirable* is all that which is against the ordinary course of Nature. The *probable* is what ever suits with com-

common opinion. The changing of *Niobe* into a stone, is an event that holds of the *admirable*; yet this becomes *probable*, when a *Deity*, to whose power this change was possible, is engag'd. *Æneas*, in the Twelfth Book of the *Æneid*, lifts, by himself, a stone, that Ten men could scarce remove; this Prodigy is made *probable* by the assistance of the Gods that took his part against *Turnus*. But most part of those that make Verse, by too great a passion they have to create *admiration*, take not sufficient care to temper it with *probability*. Against this rock most ordinarily fall the Poets, who are too easily carried to say *incredible* things, that they may be *admirable*. Thus *Homer*, in the Fifteenth Book of his *Iliad*, makes *Stentors* voice more loud than that of Fifty men. And *Virgil* makes a bough of Gold to grow on a Tree, in the Sixth of his *Æneid*. And *Boreas* demands of *Eolus*, in the *Argonauticks* of *Valerius Flaccus*, the permission to destroy the ship of the *Argonautes*, where his two Sons *Zethus* and *Calais* were embark'd. Almost all the ancient Poets, however judicious otherwise, have been guilty of this fault; not to speak of the modern, and especially *Aristo*, for that *Hippogrife* or

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winged Horse of Roger, those Giants, those Monsters, that wonderful Ring of Angelica; which renders her invisable, the Combats of Marfisa, Bradamante and Olympia, and all the bravery of that Sex, which he makes valiant in War, contrary to their Natural timidity; those Visions, Enchantments, and prodigious Adventures, are like the vain imaginations of a sick brain, and are pitied by all men of sense, because they have no colour of likelihood. The same judgment must be pronounc'd of the other Italian and Spanish Poets, who suffer their Wits to ramble in the Romantick way: 'tis too great Honour to call them Poets, they are for the most part but Rimesters.

XXIV.

BEsides, that *probability* serves to give credit to whatever *Poesie* has the most fabulous; it serves also to give, to whatever the Poet saith, a greater lustre and air of perfection, than *Truth* it self can do, though *probability* is but the Copy. For *Truth* represents things onely as they are, but *probability* renders them as they ought to be. *Truth* is well
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nigh alwayes *defective*, by the mixture of particular conditions that compose it. Nothing is brought into the world that is not remote from the *perfection* of its *Idea* from the very birth. Originals and Models are to be search'd for in *probability*, and in the *universal principles* of things, where nothing that is *material* and *singular* enters to corrupt them; for this reason the portraicts of *History* are less perfect than the portraicts of *Poesie*; and *Sophocles*, who in his *Tragedies* represents men as they ought to be, is, in the opinion of *Aristotle*, to be prefer'd before *Euripides*, who represents Men as really they are; and *Horace* makes less account of the *Lessons* of *Crantor* and *Chrysippus*, for the manners, than of those of *Homer*.

XXV.

AFTER the *Design* or *Fable*, *Aristotle* places the *Manners* for the second Part; he calls the *Manners* the cause of the *action*, for it is from these that a Man begins to act. *Achilles* retires from the *Grecian Army* in *Homer*, because he is discontent, *Aeneas* in *Virgil* carries his

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gods into *Italy*, because he is *pious*. *Me-*
dea kills her children in *Seneca*, because
 she is *revengeful*; so the *Manners* are, as
 it were, the first *springs* of all humane
actions. The Painter draws Faces by
 their features; but the Poet represents
 the *minds* of Men by their *Manners*:
 and the most general Rule for painting
 the *Manners*, is to exhibit every person
 in his proper *Character*. A *Slave*, with
 base thoughts, and servile inclinations.
 A *Prince*, with a liberal heart, and air
 of Majesty. A *Souldier*, fierce, insolent,
 surly, inconstant. An *old Man*, cove-
 tous, wary, jealous. 'Tis in descri-
 bing the *Manners*, that *Terence* triumph'd
 over all the Poets of his time, in *Var-*
ro's opinion, for his persons are never
 found out of their *Characters*. He ob-
 serves their *Manners* in all the Niceties
 and Rigours of *decorum*, which *Homer*
 himself has not alwayes done, as some
 > pretend. *Longinus* cannot endure the
wounds, the *adulteries*, the *hatred*, and
 all the other weakneses to which he
 makes the *gods* obnoxious, contrary to
 their *Character*. *Philostratus* finds much
 to object against his portraicts: but *Ju-*
stin Martyr excuses him, alledging, That
 he took these *Notions* from *Orpheus*, and
 that

that he had follow'd the opinion that publickly prevail'd in those dayes. However it be, it may be granted that *Homer* has not treated the *Gods* with all the respect due to their condition. *Aristotle* condemns *Enripides* for introducing *Menalippa* to speak too much like a *Philosopher of the Sect of Anaxagoras*, whose opinions were then new in his time. *Theon* the *Sophist* cannot endure the unseasonable discourses of *Hecuba* on her misfortunes, in the same Author. *Sophocles* makes *Oedipus* too weak and low-spirited in his Exile, after he had bestow'd on him that *Character* of constancy and resolution before his disgrace. *Seneca*, for his part, knows nothing of the *Manners*. He is a fine Speaker, who is eternally uttering pretty sayings, but is in no wise *Natural* in what he speaks, and whatever persons he makes to speak, they alwayes have the meen of Actors. The *Angelica* of *Ariosto* is too immodest. The *Armida* of *Tasso* is too free and impudent; these two Poets rob Women of their *Character*, which is Modesty. *Rinaldo* is soft and effeminate in the one, *Orlando* is too tender and passionate in the other: these weaknesses in no wise

agree with *Heroes*; they are degraded from the *Nobles* of their condition, to make them guilty of Folly. The sovereign Rule for treating of *Manners*, is to copy them after *Nature*, and above all to study well the *heart* of *Man*, to know how to distinguish all its *motions*. 'Tis this which none are acquainted with; the *heart* of man is an *abyss*, where none can sound the bottom; it is a *mystery*, which the most quick-sighted cannot pierce into, and in which the most cunning are mistaken; at the worst the Poet is oblig'd to speak of *Manners* according to the common opinion. *Ajax* must be represented *grim*, as *Sophocles*; *Polixena* and *Iphigenia* *generous*, as *Euripides* has represented them. Finally, the *Manners* must be proportionable to the *Age*, to the *Sex*, to the *Quality*, to the *Employment*, and to the *Fortune* of the persons; and it is particularly in the Second Book of *Aristotle's Rhetorick*, and in *Horace's Book of Poetry*, that this secret may be learn'd; whatever agrees not with his *principles*, is false: nothing tolerable can be perform'd in *Poetry* without this *knowledge*, and with it all becomes *admirable*. And *Horace* in that place of his *Book of Poetry*, where he makes

makes distinction of Ages to draw their Portraits, affirms, That 'tis onely by the representation of *Manners* that any can have success on the Stage; for there all is *frivolous*, if the *Manners* be not observ'd.

XXVI.

THE third part of the Art consists in the *Thoughts*, or sentiments, which are properly the expressions of the *Manners*, as words are the expressions of the *Thoughts*. Their office, saith *Aristotle*, is to approve or dislike, to stir or to calm the passions, to magnifie or diminish things. Thus *Polyxena* in the *Hecuba* of *Euripides*, cannot approve the *thoughts* of her Mother, which directed her to throw her self at the feet of *Ulysses* to move him to pity, who demanded her in the name of the *Grecian Army* to be sacrific'd, for Virtue inspir'd this generous Princess with other sentiments. 'Tis thus that *Drances* in *Virgil* amplifies (at the Council of King *Latinus*) the danger, the injustice, the ill consequences of the War they wag'd with *Aeneas*, being fearful and cowardly: and that *Turnus* confutes so strongly the sentiments of this

Speaker, being himself *valiant*, and a despiser of dangers. *Thoughts* must not only be conformable to the *Persons* to whom they are given, but likewise to the *Subject* treated of; that is to say, on great *Subjects* are required great *Thoughts*, as those of *Evadne* in the *suppliants* of *Euripides*; there this Queen, after the death of her husband *Capaneus*, may be seen to express all the extremity of her grief, by force of a sorrow the most *generous* that ever was; her affliction oppresses her, without extorting from her one word that betrays any thing of *weakness*. The *Greek Poets* are full of these great *Thoughts*: and it is much by this greatness of their *sensiments*, that they are particularly signaliz'd in their Works. *Demetrius* and *Longinus* perpetually propose them for Models to those who study the *sublime style*; and it is in these great originals that our modern Poets ought to consult *Nature*, to learn how to raise their *Wits*, and be *lofty*. We may flatter ourselves with our *Wit*, and the *Genius* of our (the *French*) Nation; but our Soul is not enough exalted to frame great *Idea's*, we are busied with petty *Subjects*, and by that means it is that we prove so cold

cold in the *great*; and that in our works scarce appears any shadow of that *sublime Poesse*, of which the ancient Poets have left such excellent Models; and above all *Homer* and *Virgil*; for great *Poetry* must be animated and sustain'd by great *thoughts*, and great *sentiments*, but these we ordinarily want, either because our *Wit* is too much limited, or because we take not care to exercise on *important* matters. Thus we are low on high *Subjects*. For example, how feeble are we, when we speak of the Conquests of a King? our Poets make their expressions swell, to supply the want of *Noble sentiments*: but it is not only the greatness of the *Subjects*, and the *thoughts* that give this *air of majesty* to *Poetry*, there is likewise required *lofty words*, and *noble expressions*.

XXVII.

THE last part is the *Expression*, and whatever regards the *language*; it must have five *qualities*, to have all the perfection *Poetry* demands: it must be *apt*, *clear*, *natural*, *splendid*, and *numerous*. The *language* must in the first place
be

be *apt*, and have nothing impure or barbarous : for though one may speak what is *great, noble, and admirable*, all is despicable and odious, if the *purity* be wanting : the greatest *thoughts* in the World have not any *grace*, if the *construction* be defective. This *purity* of writing is of late so strongly established among the *French*, that he must be very *hardy*, that will make Verse in an Age so *delicate*, unless he understand the *tongue* perfectly. Secondly, the *language* must be *clear*, that it may be intelligible, for one of the greatest faults in discourse is *obscurity* : in this *Camoens*, whom the *Portuguese* call their *Virgil*, is extremely blameable ; for his Verse are so *obscure*, that they may pass for *mysteries* : and the thoughts of *Dante* are so *profound*, that much art is requir'd to dive into them. Poetry demands a more *clear air*, and what is less incomprehensible. The third *quality*, is that it be *natural*, without affectation, according to rules of *decorum*, and *good sense*. Studied phrases, a too florid style, fine words, terms strain'd and remote, and all extraordinary expressions are insupportable to the true Poesie ; onely *simplicity* pleases, provided it be sustain'd with greatness and

and *majesty* : but this *simplicity* is not known, except by great Souls, the little *Wits* understand nothing of it ; 'tis the *Master-piece* of *Poesie*, and the *Character* of *Homer* and *Virgil*. The ignorant hunt after *Wit*, and fine *thoughts*, because they are ignorant. The *language* must be *lofty* and *splendid*, which is the fourth *quality* , for the *common* and ordinary terms are not proper for a *Poet*, he must use words that partake nothing of the *base* and *vulgar*, they must be *noble* and *magnificent* ; the expressions *strong*, the colours *lively*, the draughts *bold* : his discourse must be such as may equal the greatness of the *Idea's* of a *Workman*, who is the *Creator* of his work. The fifth *quality*, is that it be *numerous* , to uphold that *greatness* and *air of majesty* which *reigns* throughout in *Poesie*, and to express all the force and dignity of the *great* things it speaks: *terms* that go off roundly from the mouth, and that fill the ears, are sufficient to render all *admirable* , as *Poesie* requires. But this is not enough that the expressions be *stately* and *great*, there must likewise be *heat* and *vehemence* : and above all, there must *shine* throughout the discourse a certain *grace* and *delicacy*,
which

which makes the principal *ornament*, and most universal *beauty*.

XXVIII.

IT may be affirm'd that never person in any language possess'd all these *qualities* in such eminent degree as *Homer*; he is the first *Model* a Poet must propose to himself, to write as he ought; for never person writ more *purely*, nor more *naturally* than he: 'tis he alone that ever found the *secret* of joining to the *purity* of style all the *sublimity* and *greatness* that *Heroick Poesie* is capable of; for this reason, *Longinus* alwayes proposes him as the most just and exact rule for the *sublime* style. It was formerly on this original, that *Euphranor* form'd his *Idea* for drawing the image of *Jupiter*, for that he might be more successful therein, he travail'd to *Athens* to consult a Professor that read *Homer* to his Scholars; upon the *description* the Poet gives in the first Book of his *Iliad*, of a *Jupiter* with *black eye-brows*, a *brow cover'd with clouds*, and a *head environ'd with all that majesty* has most terrible, this Painter made a portraict that after was the

the wonder of his age, as *Appion* the Grammarian has reported. The same hapned to *Phidias* in that admirable Statue of *Jupiter* he made, after the Model he found in the same place in *Homer*, as *Eustathius* affirms. And one of the most famous Painters of this Age, made *Homer* be read to him to heighten his Fancy, when he dispos'd himself to draw. The same judgment is to be made of the expressions of *Virgil*, especially in his *Georgicks*.

XXIX.

THIS loftiness of expression is so important, that for the attaining it, 'tis not enough to propose *Homer* and *Virgil*, it must be search'd in *Pindar*, in *Sophocles*, in *Euripides*; and it must be had in grave and serious Subjects, that, of themselves, are capable to furnish with great thoughts, as the great thoughts are capable to furnish with noble expressions. But the way to heighten Discourse, saith *Aristotle*, is to make good use of Metaphors, and to understand perfectly their Nature, that they may not be abus'd: and he adds in the same place, That this discernment is the mark

POET. c. 2. 22.

mark of an excellent Wit; and because,
 as saith *Quintilian*, this lofti-
 ness which is aimed at by the
 boldness of a Metaphor, is dangerous,
 insomuch that it comes nigh to rashness,
Aristotle must be consulted on this mat-
 ter, to employ them with discretion, as
Virgil has done: who, treating of Bees,
 in the Fourth Book of his *Georgicks*,
 that he might heighten the meanness of
 his Subject, speaks not of them but in
 metaphorical terms, of a Court, of Legi-
 ons, of Armies, of Combats, pitch'd
 Fields, Kings, Captains, Souldiers: and
 by this admirable Art, forms a noble
 image of the lowest Subject; for after
 all, they are still but Flies. Finally, the
 Poet must above all things know what
 Eloquence has of art and method for
 the use of Figures: for it is onely by
 the Figures that he gives force to the pas-
 sions, lustre to the discourses, weight to
 the reasons, and makes delightful all he
 speaks. 'Tis onely by the most lively
 Figures of Eloquence that all the emo-
 tions of the Soul become fervent and
 passionate: Nature must be the onely
 guide that can be propos'd in the use of
 these Figures and Metaphors, and must
 therefore be well understood, that it
 may

may be trac'd and follow'd without mistake: for no portraicts can be drawn that have *resemblance* without it, and all the *images* that *Poetry* employs in expressing it self, are false, unless they be *natural*.

XXX.

BUt this *sublime* stile is the *Rock* to the mean *Wits*: they flie out in too vast and boysterous terms, from what is *natural*, when they endeavour to be *high* and lofty. For this *haughty* and pompous kind of speech becomes *vain* and *cold*, if not supported with *great thoughts*; and the great words that are indiscreetly *affected* to heighten the discourse, for the most part, onely make a *noise*. The Emperor *Nero* who had the *Worm* in his Head, and conceited himself a *Wit*, ran into this *Character* with that extravagance, that he became a Subject of *Railery* to the *Satyrists* of his time. *Statius*, who had a better *Genius*, would imitate this kind of writing in his Poems, by an *affectation* of great words, and *swelling* expressions: but seeing he *swells* into *fastian*, he fills the ears without touching the heart; and all those uni-
ver-

versally, who in the *decline* of the Empire affected to be *lofty*, and wanted *Wit*, by a too great *boldness* of language, became *obscure*, as *Persius* in his *Satyres*; or *cold* and *flat*, as *Valerius Flaccus* in his *Argonauticks*: or fell into the *impropriety*, as *Sidonius Apollinaris*, and the others. For the most essential vertue of *Speech*, next to the *clearness* and *perspicuity*, is that it be *chaste* and *modest*, as *Demetrius Phalerius* observes; There must be (saith he) a *proportion betwixt the words and the things*: and nothing is more ridiculous, than to handle a *frivolous* Subject in a *sublime* stile; for whatsoever is disproportionate, is either altogether *false*, or at the least, is *trifling* and *childish*. This by *Socrates* is objected to the *sophist Gorgias Leontinus*, whom he pleasantly plays upon for affecting to speak *petty* things with a *great* and *solemn* *mean*. Most *French* Poets fall into this vice, for want of *Genius*; their verses where *Logick* is much neglected, most commonly, are either *Pedantry*, or *Nonsense*. Should I cite Examples, there would be no end. *Dubartas* and *Ronsard*, who would heighten their *Conceits* with *great* words after their fashion, com-
pounded

pounded according to the manner of the Greek, and of which the French Tongue is not capable, were guilty of *impropriety*, and made themselves *barbarous*; who succeeded them, committed the same fault. *Malherb* was the first that join'd *purity* to the *lofty* style; but being the *beginner*, he could not carry it to *perfection*; there is good store of *Prose* amongst his *Verse*. *Theophile*, who follow'd him, by too great affectation of the *casse* style, degenerated into *trifling* and *puerility*: the truth is, the foundation of his *Character* was a *luxuriant* fancy, rather than a *fruitful* wit. The *Pharsale* of *Brebenf* corrupted afterwards much of the youth, who were *dazled* at the *pomp* of his *Verse*. 'Tis true, they have *splendour*: but after all, whatever seem'd *great* and *sublime* in this *Poem*, when 'tis view'd near hand, will not pass with the intelligent, but for a *false lustre* full of affectation. The *small Wits* were transported with the noise this *Poem* made formerly, which at the bottom has nothing in it *natural*.

Q. XXXIX. E

XXXI.

OF late some have fallen into another extremity, by a too scrupulous care of *purify of language*: they have begun to take from *Poesie* all its *nerves*, and all its *majesty*, by a too *timorous* reservedness, and *false modesty*, which some thought to make the *Character* of the *French Tongue*, by robbing it of all those *wise and judicious boldnesses* that *Poesie* demands: they would retrench, without reason, the use of *Metaphors*, and of all those *Figures* that give life and *lustre* to the *expressions*: and study to confine all the excellency of this admirable Art within the bounds of a *pure and correct Discourse*, without exposing it to the danger of any high and *bold flight*. The gust of the Age, which lov'd *purity*; the *women*, who naturally are *modest*, the *Court*, which then had scarce any Commerce with the *great men* of *Antiquity*, through their ordinary *antipathy* to learning, and the *general ignorance* in the persons of *Quality*, gave reputation to this way of writing. But nothing more
 autho-

authoriz'd it, than the Verses of *Voiture* and *Sarazin*, the *Metamorphosis* of the eyes of *Phyllis* into stars, the Temple of Death, the *Eglogues* of *Lane*, and some other works of that Character, that came abroad at that time with a success which distinguish'd them from the *Vulgar*. In this way they were *polite*, and writ good sense; and it agreed with the gust of the Age, and was follow'd: and who succeeded therein, would make a new kind of refinement in Poetry; as if the Art consisted onely in the purity and exactness of language. This indeed pleased well, and was much to the advantage of Women that had a mind to be tampering and writing in Verse; they found it their concern to give vogue to this kind of writing, of which they were as capable as the most part of men; for all the secret was no more but to make some little easie Verses, in which they were content, if they could close some kind of delicateness of sweet and passionate thoughts, which they made the essence of Poetry. The ill fortune is, *Horace* was not of their mind; It is not enough (saith he) to write with purity to make a Poet: he must have other qualities. But there are now living, Authors, of a more

strong and *noble Genius* than those I have mention'd ; who, at this day, let us see in their Works, that *purity* of language may be join'd with *greatness of thoughts*, and with all the *elevation*, whereof *Heroick Poësie* can be capable ; but there is not in the *French Tongue* any work, wherein is so much *Poetry*, as in the Poem of *Saint Louis* ; yet the Author is not *reserved* enough, he gives his *Wit* too much scope, and his *Fancy* always carries him too far.

XXXII.

BUT examining well, one shall find that *Heroick Poetry* is not so much in use among the *French*, as some would persuade us: either by the *application* of them to little and *frivolous Subjects*, or by a *natural difficulty* in them, which clogs and suffers them not to *rise* in the matters of which they treat: or by reason they want a *Genius* for that *Character* they ought to bear; or that, in effect, their *Models* are defective. He is but capable of very little, who governs himself, and is directed onely by the *modern Poems*; whereas nothing noble
and

and *sublime* can be made without consulting the *Ancients*. The greatest *flights* of *Latin Poetry* are in some certain excellent *places* of *Virgil's Georgicks*, and everywhere in his *Aeneid*, that are capable of great *Figures*. The *modern Latin Poets* afford but few; most whereof have onely copied *Virgil's phrases*, without expressing his *spirit*. *Fracaflorius*, *Vida*, *Cardinal Sadolet*, *Sannazarus*, have some *touches* of that noble *ayr*, but not many: they *fall* and return again to their own *Genius*, when they have strein'd a little to reach that of *Virgil*: and amidst the vain *efforts* of a *servile* imitation, there continually escapes from them some *strokes* of their own natural spirit. It may be affirm'd likewise, that the best *modern Poets* have the advantage more by their *words*, than by their *thoughts*: what they say, would be very little worth, were it devested of the *expression*.

XXXIII.

THE most important and most necessary part for a Poet, to make him succeed well on *high Subjects*, is to

know well to *distinguish* what there is of *beautiful* and pleasant in *Nature*, that he may form thereof *perpetual images* : for *Poetry* is an Art where every thing should *please*. It is not enough to exhibit *Nature*, which in certain places is *rude* and unpleasant ; he must choose in her what is *beautiful*, from what is *not* : she has her *secret graces* in Subjects, which he must discover. How *clear-sighted* must a Poet be, to discern what to choose, and what to refuse, without mistaking, that he may avoid the object that will *not please*, and retain what will ? *Nicander*, *Aratus*, *Lucretius*, in the *description* they have made of *natural things*, wanted this admirable *secret*, which *Virgil* afterwards found out ; he had the Art to give *delight* whilst he *instructed* by the pleasant images, and most exquisite strokes of *Poetry*, which adorn his *Georgicks*, and *sweeten* the harshness of those precepts he gives on a Subject, in it self *austere* and flat. It is true, *Lucretius* has beautiful draughts, and *Virgil* understood well to copy them without losing ought of their perfection, because he had a judgment to discern them ; which knowledge cannot be attain'd, but by a long commerce with the good Authors

Authors of Antiquity, whose Works are the onely true *sources*, whence these *riches* so necessary to *Poetry* may be *drawn*, and whence is deriv'd that good *sense*, and that just discernment which distinguishes the true from the *false* in *natural* beauties: and a Poet that hath found in his Works these *happy hits*, which are born to *please*, may rejoyce as much, as the Workman that has found a precious *jewel*. It is not, but by the help of his *Genius*, that he finds these *beauties*, and they are made by the *turn* given to the things he writes.

XXXIV.

There is a particular *Rhetorick* for *Poetry*, which the *Modern* Poets scarce understand at all; this Art consists in discerning very precisely what ought to be said *figuratively*, and what to be spoken *simply*: and in knowing well where ornament is requir'd, and where not. *Tasso* understood not well this secret, he is too *trim* and too polite in places, where the *gravity* of the Subject demanded a more simple and serious stile: as for example, where *Tan-*

cred comes near the Tomb of *Clorinda*,
 he makes the unfortunate Lover, who
 came from slaying his Mistress, speak
points, instead of expressing his sorrow
naturally, he commits this fault in many
 other places. *Guarini* in his *Pastor Fido*,
 and *Bonarelli* in his *Phyllis*, are often guilty
 of this vice, they alwayes think rather
 to speak things *wittily*, than *naturally*:
 this is the most ordinary *Rock* to
 mean Wits, who suffer their fancy to flie
 out after the pleasing images they find
 in their way: they rush into the descriptions
 of *Groves*, *Rivers*, *Fountains*, and
Temples, which *Horace* calls *Childish* in his
Book of Poësie. 'Tis onely the talent
 of great men to know to *speak*, and to
 be *silent*; to be *florid*, and to be *plain*;
 to be *lofty*, and to be *low*; to use *figures*,
 and to speak *simply*; to mingle *fiction*
 and ornament, as the Subject requires;
 finally, to manage all well in his Subject,
 without pretending to give *delight*,
 where he should only *instruct*, and with-
 out rising in *great* thoughts, where *natural*
 and *common sentiments* are requir-
 ed, a *simple* thought in its proper
 place, is more worth than all the most
exquisite words and wit out of season.
Fancy, which is all the *wit* of common
 Writers,

Writers, apprehends not this ; this *discernment*, and this particular Rhetorick, which is proper to *Poetry*, is a pure effect of the *judgment*.

XXXV.

YET is there in *Poetry*, as in other Arts, certain things that cannot be expressed, which are (as it were) *mysteries*. There are no precepts, to teach the hidden *graces*, the insensible *charms*, and all that secret power of *Poetry* which passes to the heart, as there is no method to teach to please, 'tis a pure effect of *Nature*. However, *Nature* alone can never please regularly, unless in the small *compositions* : there must be the assistance of Art to succeed well in the great *Poems*. 'Tis by this help that a *Genius* a little cultivated, shall range his thoughts in that admirable order which makes the greatest beauty in the productions of *wit* : by this order every thing becomes delightful, because, as *Horace* saith, 'tis in its place ; but this is the work of *judgment*, as invention the work of *imagination* ; and this order that keeps all right, and without which
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the most beautiful become deform'd, is
a *mystery* but little known to *modern*
Poets.

XXXVI.

NExt to *Order*, the greatest delight of
Poetry comes from the *Manners*,
and from the *Passions*, when they are
well handled. If you would have ap-
plause, saith *Horace* to the *Poets*, learn
well to distinguish the *Manners* of every
Age, and the *Characters* proper to them in
general and in particular. It was by this
great secret that *Menander* got that high
reputation at *Athens*, as appears by the
testimony of *Plutarch*, and that *Terence*
so exceedingly pleased the *Romans*;
never Poet better understood the *Man-
ners*, than these two. *Plato* affirms, in
the Ninth Book of his *Commonwealth*,
that *Homer* had particularly signaliz'd
himself by the *Manners* of men which
he had describ'd in his Poems to the
life. But that I may not repeat what
hath been said in the *Twenty fifth Re-
flection*, I proceed to the *Passions*: which
give no less grace to *Poetry*, than the
Manners: when the Poet has found the
Art to make them move by their natu-
ral

real springs. Without the Passions, all is cold and flat in the discourse, saith Quintilian: for they are, as it were, the soul and life of it; but the secret is to express them according to the several estates and different degrees from their birth; and in this distinction consists all the delicacy, wherewith the Passions are to be handled, to give them that Character which renders them admirable, by the secret motions they impress on the Soul. Hecuba in Euripides falls into a swoon on the Stage, the better to express all the weight of her sorrow that could not be represented by words. But Achilles appears with too much calmness and tranquility at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, design'd for him in marriage by Agamemnon: his grief has expressions too little suiting to the natural impetuosity of his heart. Clytemnestra much better preserves her Character; she discovers all the passion of a Mother in the loss of a Daughter so lovely as was this unfortunate Princess, whom they were about to sacrifice, to appease the Gods; and Agamemnon generously layes aside the tenderness of a Father, to take, as he ought, the sentiments of a King; he neglected his own interest, to provide for the

the publick. *Seneca*, so little *natural* as he is, omits not to have of these strokes that distinguish the passion, as that of *Phædra* in the second Act of his *Hippolytus*; for she affects a negligence of her person, and considered it as not very proper to please a *Hunter*, who hated ornament and neatness. 'Tis finally this exact distinction of the different degrees of *passion*, that is of most effect in *Poetry*: for this gives the draught of Nature, and is the most infallible *spring* for moving the Soul; but it is good to observe that the most ardent and lively *passions* become *cold* and dead, if they be not well managed, or be not in their place. The Poet must judge when there must be a *calm*, and when there must be *trouble*; for nothing is more ridiculous, than *passion* out of season. But it is not enough to move a *passion* by a *notable* incident, there must be Art to conduct it, so far as it should go; for by a *passion* that is imperfect and *abortive*, the Soul of the *Spectator* may be shaken, but this is not enough, it must be ravish'd.

XXXVII.

BESIDES the graces that *Poetry* finds in displaying the *Manners* and the *Passions*: there is a certain *I know not what* in the *Numbers*, which is understood by few, and notwithstanding gives great *delight* in *Poetry*. *Homer* hath excelled generally all the Poets by this Art; whether the *nature* of his language was favourable to him, by the variety in the numbers, and by the noble sound of the words: or that the *delicacy* of his ear made him perceive this *grace*, whereof the other Poets of his time were not sensible; for his Verse sound the most *harmoniously* that can be imagin'd. *Athenens* pretends that nothing is more proper to be sung than the verses of *Homer*, so *natural* is the *harmony* of them; 'tis true, I never read this Poet, or hear him read, but I feel, what is found in a Battel, when the *Trumpets* are heard. *Virgil*, who had a *nice ear*, did not imitate *Homer* in this, further than the *harshness*, or rather the heaviness of the *Latin Tongue* permitted him. *Ennius* had not then in his dayes
dis-

discover'd this *grace*, which is in the *numbers*, whereof appears no footstep in his verse. *Lucretius* perceived it first, but gave only the imperfect strokes of this beauty in *versification*, which *Virgil* finish'd so far as the language was capable. The other Poets, as *Ovid* in his *Metamorphoses*, *Statius* in his two *Poets*, *Valerius Flaccus* in his *Argonautes*, *Silius Italicus* in his *Hannibal*, *Claudian* in his *Ravishment of Proserpina* never went so far. Among the *modern Poets* that have writ in *Latin* of late dayes, those who could attain to the *numbers* and *cadence* of *Virgil* in the turn of their verse, have had most reputation; and because that *Buchanan*, who otherwise had wit, fancy, and a pure stile, perceiv'd not this *grace*, or neglected it, he hath lost much of his price: perhaps nothing was wanting to make him an accomplish'd Poet, but this perfection, which most certainly is not *Chimerical*; and whoever shall reflect a little on the power of the *Dorian*, *Lydian* and *Phrygian* Ayrs, whereof *Aristotle* speaks in his *Problems*, and *Athenens* in his *Banquets*, he may acknowledge what virtue there is in *number* and *harmony*: It is a beauty unknown to the *French Tongue*,

Tongue, where all the syllables are counted in the verses, and where there is no diversity of cadence.

XXXVIII.

There yet remains *beauties* and ornaments whereof each *Tongue* is capable, and these the Poet must understand, and must not confound, when he writes in another Tongue, than those he proposes for Models, which *Virgil* hath well observ'd in imitating *Homer*; for he did not give himself over to follow him *servilely* in the exact *turn* of his versification: he knew withall that those *big words* which make a beauty at the end of the *Greek* verses, would have been no *elegancy* in the *Latin*: because, in effect, this succeeds not with *Lucretius*. *Virgil* found that the character of the *Latin* Tongue requir'd numbers too severe, as *Martial* observes, to allow of that *licentious* cadence, which was familiar with the *Greek*. *Horace*, who propos'd the *Odes* of *Pindar* for the model of those he writ in *Latin*, quitted immediately the numbers and the *turn* of that Authors verse, of which he found

found the *Latin Tongue* uncappable, as the *French Poetry* is not accomodated to the *numbers* of the *Spanish* and *Italian*, because every language is confin'd within certain bounds, which makes the beauty of their *Character*. 'Tis a great Art to know these beauties, and well to distinguish them each from other; but besides the *numbers* that are particular to each Tongue, there is also a certain *turn of the period* which makes the cadence and the harmony, of which none ought to be ignorant. How many are there of the *modern Poets*, who have endeavour'd to imitate *Virgil*, without being able to attain this admirable *turn*, which renders him so majestic: *Sannazarus*, *Fracaſtorius*, *Sadoletus*, *Sainte Marthe* come somewhat nigh it, the others never so much as understood it. This *cast off the period* which is proper to each kind of verse, is necessary for expressing their *Character*: it must be grave, and the numbers thick in *Heroick*, in *Tragick* verse, and in *Odes*: it must be soft and easie in the *little verse* and delicate subjects.

XXXIX.

BESIDES all the *Rules* taken from *Aristotle*, there remains *one* mention'd by *Horace*, to which all the other *Rules* must be subject, as to the most *essential*, which is the *decorum*. Without which the other *Rules* of *Poetry* are false: it being the most solid foundation of that *probability* so essential to this Art. Because it is only by the *decorum* that this *probability* gains its effect; all becomes *probable*, where the *decorum* is strictly preserv'd in all circumstances. One ordinarily transgresses this Rule, either by confounding the *serious* with the *pleasant*, as *Pulci* has done in his Poem of *Morgante*; or by giving *Manners* disproportionate to the condition of the persons, as *Guarini* has done to his *Shepherds*, which are too *polite*: in like manner as those of *Ronsard* are too *gross*; or because no regard is had to make the *wonderful* Adventures *probable*, whereof *Ariosto* is guilty in his *Orlando*; or that a due *preparation* is not made for the great Events by a *natural* Conduct, in which *Bernardo Tasso* trans-

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gressed in his Poem of *Amadis*, and in his *Floridante*; or by want of care to sustain the *Characters* of persons, as *Theophile* in his Tragedy of *Pyramus* and *Thisbe*; or by following rather a capricious *Genius* than *Nature*, as *Lope de Vega*, who gives his wit too much *swinge*, and is ever *foisting* in his own *Fancies* on all occasions; or by want of *Modesty*, as *Dante*, who invokes his own wit for his *Deity*; and as *Boccace*, who is perpetually *speaking of himself*: or by saying every thing *indifferently* without shame, as Cavalier *Marino* in his *Adonis*. Finally, whatever is against the Rules of *Time*, of *Manners*, of *Thoughts*, of *Expression*, is contrary to the *decorum*, which is the most *universal* of all the *Rules*.

XL.

And to close, in a last *Reflection*, all the others that can be made, the Poet must understand that the great secret of the *Art* is to work his *matter* well, and to *execute* happily what he had design'd with all the *attention* his Subject requires; that he know always,

wayes, that in great works he may be negligent in certain places, which regularly ought to be neglected; that all may not be finish'd alike, and what is finish'd may appear so the more, among the studied negligences. These strokes less perfect then the rest, and these inequalities of expression which Art requires, are as necessary to Poesse, as the shades to a Painter, which serve to give lustre to the other parts of his work. 'Tis the fault of the mean wits, to express things more high than they ought to be expressed. So, the Poet must take heed that he run not with the young Writers into the florid stile, by his excessive ornaments, and far-fetch't beauties; that he retrench boldly what is too luxuriant, for all becomes false in Poetry, that glitters too much. The Poet is in no wise natural, who will be alwayes speaking fine things: he will not be so prodigal of his wit, when he hath wit form'd as it ought to be; for all he speaks is worth nothing, if he will be speaking too finely. The course he must take to come at good sense, is to have yet a greater care in his expression of things, than in his words, because it is in the things he must search the principal graces of his discourse.

course. The *discourse* must be diversified by the *variety* of expressions, because the *same images* tire the mind of the Reader : and there must not only be frequent *figures* in the *words*, but also different *turns* in the *thoughts*. The narrow and limited *wits* are always finding themselves, and by the *barrenness* of their *Genius*, become like that *player of the Lute* in Horace, who could only *strike on one string*. For the rest, it is good to be mindful, that none must meddle with making Verses, who does not make them *excellently*, and does not *distinguish* himself from others. For since none is oblig'd to make them, to what end should he *crack* his brain, and hazard his Reputation, unless he acquit himself well ? he may know likewise that *Poetry* will be no honour to men of *little sense* ; and that the appetite of *Versé-making* is a dangerous malady, when it seizes on an *indifferent wit* : that he is liable to all extravagancies imaginable, who is *taken* therewith and wants a *Genius* : that he should be endu'd with *submission*, and be docible, that he fall not into this misfortune. For after the manner men live at present, he may find everywhere some or other who out of
charity

charity or *ill humour*, are alwayes ready to give him advice : that the greatest fault of a Poet is to be *indocible* ; and that nothing hath made so many *bad Poets*, as *Flattery*, which will be continually buzzing in his ears, and *daubing* him on that occasion, so soon as he begins to *tamper* with writing Verse ; especially it is to be consider'd, that he should apply himself *betimes* to this mystery, to attain any perfection : that he may *form* his imagination to that *delicate ayre*, which is not to be had, but from the first *Idea's* of our youth. *Julius* and *Joseph Scaliger* could not succeed herein, for having begun this study too late, neither of them could overcome the *stiffness* of their *Genius*, which had before *bent* their *wit* another way : and though the *Son* was more polite than his *Father*, yet had he nothing of *elegancy*, or *graceful* in his *Poetry*, no more than the other learned men of his time ; and that he who aspires to the glory of this profession, may reckon that he hath much more to lose, than to gain, by writing Verse, in an Age so *squeamish* as this of ours. We are no longer in that Age, when men got reputation by their *fool-hardy* writing : then it was no diffi-

cult matter to impose, seeing what *glitter'd*, was more respected than what was *solid*: and one may reflect that nothing can now succeed in *Poetry*, unless it be *delicately conceiv'd*, and *form'd* with the utmost *regularity*, and *set off* with all the *grace* and *happinefs* of expression: that *Verse* are not *tolerable*, if but *indifferent*; and are *ridiculous*, unless they be *admirable*. That finally, true *Poetry* is not perceiv'd but by the impression it makes on the Soul; it is not as it should be, unless it go to the heart: hence it is that *Homer animates* me, *Virgil heats* me, and all the rest *freez* me, so cold and flat they are.

This is what may be said in *General* of *Poetry*, after follows the *Particular*.

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS
ON
ARISTOTLE's Book
OF
POESIE
In Particular.

I.



Aristotle distinguishes
Poesie into three di-
vers kinds of per-
fect Poems, the *E-
pick*, the *Tragick*,
and the *Comick*. *Ho-
race* reduces these
three into two onely, one whereof con-
sists in *Action*, the other in *Narration*;
all the other kinds whereof *Aristotle*
makes mention may be brought to these
two, the *Comedy* to the *Drammatick*,
the *Satire* to the *Comedy*, the *Ode* and
Eglogue to the *Heroick* Poem; for the

Sonnet, Madrigal, Epigram, &c. are only a sort of *imperfect* Poems ; it is the Poets part to consult his strength in the different wayes he must hold in the different *Characters of Verse*, that he may not do violence to his *Genius*.

II.

THe *Epick* Poem is that which is the greatest and most *Noble* in *Poesie* ; it is the greatest work that humane wit is capable of. All the Nobleness, and all the elevation of the most perfect *Genius*, can hardly suffice to form one such as is requisite for an *Heroick* Poet ; the difficulty of finding together *fancy* and *judgment*, heat of *imagination*, and sobriety of *reason*, *precipitation* of spirit, and *solidity* of mind, causes the rareness of this Character, and of this happy temperament which makes a Poet accomplish'd ; it requires great *images*, and yet a greater *wit* to form them. Finally, there must be a judgment so solid, a discernment so exquisite, such perfect knowledge of the language, in which he writes ; such obstinate study, profound meditation, vast capacity, that scarce

scarce whole Ages can produce one *Genius* fit for an *Epick Poem*. And it is an enterprise so bold, that it cannot fall into a wise Man's thoughts, but affright him. Yet how many Poets have we seen of late dayes, who, without *capacity*, and without *study*, have dar'd to undertake these sort of Poems; having no other foundation for all, but the onely *beat* of their imagination, and some *briskness* of spirit.

III.

BUt another hinderance to this Character, is to have a Wit too *vast*; for such will make nothing *exact* in these kind of works, whose chief perfection is the *justness*. These Wits that strike at all, are apt to pass the bounds: the *swing* of their *Genius* carries them to irregularity; nothing they do is exact, because their *wit* is not: all that they say, and all that they imagine, is alwayes *vast*; they neither have proportion in the *design*, nor justness in the *thought*, nor exactness in the *expression*. This fault is common to the most of the *modern Poets*, especially to the *Spaniards*,

ards, as *Diego Ximenes* in his Poem of *Cid Ruydias de Bivar*, *Camocns* in his *Conquest of the Indians by the Portuguese*: and among the *Italians*, *Boiardo*, *Ariosto*, *Cavalier Marino*, and *Chiabrera*, whose Works are very ill patterns for an *Epick Poem*: they perpetually digress, yet there is alwayes *wit* in their digressions. The *French*, who pretend to *wit*, and love *wit* even in trifles, suffer'd themselves to be blinded with the Poems of *Ariosto* and *Cavalier Marino*. The beauty of their Verse, their expression, the pleasant images they make of things they treat of, and the charms of their Verse, have so enchanted most part of these *French* Poets, that they have not seen the gross enormities of judgment those Authors run into. This is ordinary with Poets that have *wit*, and little judgment: they endeavour to hide what is irregular in their Works by glittering faults, and false beauties; but they must have a great judgment and wisdom to sustain a great design in the utmost regularity.

IV.

THe value of *Heroick Poesie* is yet more high by the *matter*, and by its *end*, than by its *form*; it discourses not but of *Kings* and *Princes*; it gives not Lessons but to the *Grandeers* to govern the People, and sets before them the *Idea* of a virtue much more perfect than *History* can do; for *History* proposes not virtue but imperfect, as it is found in the *particulars*; and *Poetry* proposes it free from all imperfections, and as it ought to be in *general*, and in the *abstract*. This made *Aristotle* confess that *Poesie is a better School of virtue, than Philosophy it self*, Arist. Poet. c. 10. because it goes more directly to perfection by the *verisimilitude*, than Philosophy can do with the naked *truth*. And because the Poet gives not *reason* for what he saith, as the Philosopher, but the *reason* must be perceiv'd without his speaking it.

V. Poesie

V.

Poësie in general, is a picture or imitation of an action; and Heroick Poësie is the imitation or picture of an Heroick action, as Aristotle informs us. The qualifications he gives to this action, are, that it be one and simple, true, or that passes for true, and that it ought to be happy, commendable, and entire. He believes that it must be one and simple, to avoid confusion; that it must be true, to deserve credit; happy and commendable, to serve for a pattern and instruction to the *Grandeës*, and to be a publick example of virtue. Finally, it must be entire, that there may be nothing in it imperfect. These conditions are so essential to the action, which is to serve for the Subject of an Heroick Poem, that it is altogether defective, if any one of them be wanting; but to the end the action may be entirely perfect in a Poem, all must go in a direct line to establish the merit of the Heroe, and to distinguish him from all others: as the figures in a Table ought to have nothing so shining either by the colours,
or

or by the lights that may divert the eyes from the *principal* figure. 'Tis in this that *Tasso* was mistaken, who in his Poem of the *Conquest of Hierusalem*, makes *Rinaldo* do all that is *shining* and extraordinary ; it is *Rinaldo* that slays *Adrastus*, *Tysapharnes*, *Solyman*, and all the principal Leaders of the Enemy : 'Tis he that breaks the *Charm* of the *Enchanted Forest* ; the most important *Episodes* are reserv'd for him ; nothing is done in his absence : he alone is call'd out to all the great actions. *Godfrey*, who is the *Heroe*, has nothing to do ; and it is in vain that *Tasso* would excuse this fault by the *Allegory*, in a long Treatise made to that end ; that is to justify one *Chimera* with another. *Homer*, whose sense was more right, by a spirit altogether contrary, makes *Achilles*, who is his *Heroe*, do all ; though it is true, he strays sometimes too far from him, and forgets him. *Virgil* never falls into this fault : one shall never lose the sight of *Aeneas* in the *Aeneid*, as they do of *Achilles* in the *Iliad*.

VI.

THe *action* must neither be too *vast*,
 nor too much *limited*, it must have
 a just greatness within the natural pro-
 portion of an *heroick action*, to be per-
 fect. The War of *Troy* that lasted ten
 years, had been a matter disproportion'd
 for a Poem; so great an object had
 tyr'd the *poet*, and a natural *action* of the
 same man cannot regularly be of that
 continuance; but neither ought it to be
 too much *limited*, lest it become despi-
 cable by the littleness. Hence it is that
 the Poem of *Gabriel Chiabrera* on the
 the *Conquest of Rhodes* by *Amedee of Sa-*
voy, is in some measures defective in the
action, which lasts but four days. For
 great atchievements, to be extraordinary,
 are not perform'd but by slow means,
 and *intrigues* wrought and woven with
 a long thread: with persons often ab-
 sent and remote: more time is necessa-
 ry to move the *springs* of great designs.
 Besides in the precipitation of so short
 time, the *Events* cannot be prepar'd, the
Characters sustain'd, the *Incidents* ma-
 nag'd, the *Manners* observ'd, and no-
 thing

thing works as it should do in these great *Machines*; and the *probability* is throughout destroy'd.

VII.

THE *unity* of the action, however simple and scrupulous it ought to be, is no enemy to those delights which naturally arise from *variety*, when the *variety* is attended with that *order* and that proportion which makes *uniformity*; as one Palace may contain the various ornaments of *Architecture*, and a great diversity of parts, provided it be built in the same *order*, and after the same design. This *variety* hath a large field in *Heroick Poësie*; the *Enterprises* of War, the *Treaties* of Peace, *Ambassies*, *Negotiations*, *Voyages*, *Councils*, *Debates*, *building* of Palaces and Towns, *Manners*, *Passions*, unexpected *Discoveries*, unforeseen and surprizing *Revolutions*, and the different images of all that happens in the life of great Men, may there be employ'd, so be that all go to the same end; without this *order*, the most beautiful figures become monstrous, and like those extravagances that *Horace* taxes as ridiculous, in the beginning of his Book of *Poësie*.

VIII. It

VIII.

IT is particularly by the Art of *Episodes*, that this great variety of matters which adorn a Poem, is brought into the principal *action*; but though the *Episodes* are a kind of digression from the subject, being an adventure wholly foreign, that is added to the principal *action* to adorn it; yet, however, it ought to have a natural relation to the principal *action*, to make thereof a work that hath *order* and proportion: and therefore must the *decorum* of persons, of time, and of place, be preserv'd. without this condition the *Episode* is no longer *probable*, and there appears an air of affectation, which becomes ridiculous. Which *Horace* reproaches to the witless Poets, who would be gay on grave subjects, and search foreign ornaments, where only the natural were proper. The *Episodes* of *Lucan*, who makes long Scholastick dissertations and disputes meerly speculative, on things that fall in his way, shew much of constraint and affectation. But besides, that the *Episode* must be natural, and never far-fetch't;

fetch't ; it is to be handled with a certain management and dexterity, that it may not lie in the way to make confusion, nor burthen the subject with too much action. 'Tis for this cause *Aristotle* so greatly blames the *Episodical Fables*, and it is also in this that the art of *Homer* principally appears, who never confounds any thing in the throng of objects he represents : never was Poem more charg'd with matter than the *Iliad*, yet never any thing appear'd more simple or more natural ; for every thing there is in due order. Any too licentious *Paracronism* may render an *Episode* defective and imperfect, though that of *Dido* in the fourth of the *Aeneid* is pardonable, by the admirable effect it produceth ; and in so great an elongation of times as those of *Aeneas* and *Dido* ; the Poet need not be a slave to *Chronology*. The most natural *Episodes* are most proper to circumstantiate the principal action best, that are the causes, the effects, the beginning, and the consequences of it ; but we find not alwayes these qualifications in *Tasso*, who seeks to please often by passages that are too glittering ; and much less in *Ariosto*, whose *Episodes* are too affected, never

probable, never prepar'd, and often without any dependance on his subject, as that of King *Agramante* and *Marsifer*; but these things are not to be expected from a Poem, where the *Heroes* are *Paladins*; and where predominates an air of *Ghimerical* and *Romantick Knight-errantry*, rather than any *Heroick Spirit*.

IX.

THough all must be *natural* in an *Epic Poem*, yet the *order* that is observ'd in relating things, ought not so to be; for were it *natural*, and according to the succession of time, it would be a *History*, and not a *Poem*; and thereby one would fall into the same fault with the impertinent *Scribler*, whom *Horace* makes ridiculous, who begun his Poem of the *Trojan War*, with the loves of *Jupiter* and *Leda*, and with the birth of *Hele*, who was the cause of the War. For to render the *Narration* more insinuating, delightful, and surprising, the Poet must confound the *natural* order of times and things; to make thereof one purely *artificial*. 'Tis by this Maxim, that the Poem of *Nonnus* upon *Bacchus*, the *Thebaid*

baud of *Statius*, and the Poems of the first *Italians*, who writ before they knew the Rules of *Aristotle*; and some *Spanish* Poems, as that of *Diego Ximenes*, on the Conquest of *Valencia*, are so defective.

X.

THe principal Character of an *Heroick* Poem, consists in the *Narration*; 'tis in this that it is oppos'd to the *Dramatick*, which consists altogether in the *action*: but as nothing is more difficult than to relate things, as one ought, the Poet must employ all his art to succeed herein. The qualities a *Narration* must have, to be perfect, are these; it must be *short* and succinct; that nothing may be idle, flat, or tedious; it must be *lively*, quick, and delightful, that it may have nothing but what is attractive: finally, it must be *simple* and natural; but it is a great art, to know to relate things simply, and yet the *simplicity* not appear. The most ordinary graces of a *Narration* must come from the *figures*, the *transitions*, and from all those delicate *turns*, that carry the Reader from one thing to another, without his regarding it; and

in this chiefly consists all the artifice of the *Narration*. It must never pour out all the matter, that some place may always be left for the natural Reflections of the Reader; it must likewise avoid the particulars and the length of affected description. *Homer*, great speaker as he is, amuses not himself, sayes *Lucian*, to discourse of the torments of the unhappy in Hell, when *Ulysses* descended thither; though this was a fair occasion for him. But the Poet, when he is judicious, makes no descriptions but to clear the matters, and never to shew his Wit. Finally, the *Narration* must be *delightful*, not only by the variety of things it relates, but likewise by the variety of the numbers. 'Tis this variety that makes the Greek *versification* more harmonious, and more proper for *Narration*, than the Latin; and though *Tasso* has been successful enough in the *Narrations* of his Poem, and likewise *Ariosto*, who, to me, seems more natural than he; yet the *pauses* and interruptions to which the *Italian Poësie* is subjected, by the *Stanza's*, do weaken, methinks, and enervate that force and vigour, which makes one part of the Character of *Heroick Verse*. That *Monotomie* of the *Alex*

Alexandrin Verse which can suffer no difference, nor any variety of numbers, seems, to me, likewise a great weakness in the *French Poetry*: and though the vigour of the Verse might be sustain'd either by the great Subjects, or by an extraordinary *Genius* and *Wit* above the common rate, yet this sort of Verse will grow tedious and irksom in a *long Poem*. For the rest, one shall scarce ever meet with *Narrations* that are continued with the same force and the same spirit, except in *Homer* and *Virgil*. It is true, the *Narration* of the death of *Polixena* in the *Hecuba* of *Euripides*, is the most lively and most moving in the world; and that of *Tecmessa* in the *Ajax* of *Sophocles*, is the most tender and most passionate that can be imagin'd. 'Tis by these great Models that a Poet must learn to be *pathetical* in what he relates, without amusing himself to make subtle and witty *Narrations*, by ridiculous affectations. In the other Greek and Latin Poets, are found onely some imperfect essayes of *Narrations*. He, among the Moderns, who has the best *Genius* to sustain all the Nobleness of a *Narration* in *Heroick Verse*, is *Hierom Vida* Bishop of *Alba*, in his Poem on the death of *Jesus*

ſus Chriſt; and if ſometimes he fell not into low expreſſions, and harſhneſſes like thoſe of *Lucretius*, his ſtile had been incomparable. *Scaliger* objects againſt the long Narrations, which *Homer* makes his *Heroes* ſpeak in the heat and fury of a Battel, in effect this is neither natural nor probable; neither can I approve the deſcriptions of *Alcina's* Palace in *Ariosto*, nor of *Armida's* in *Taſſo*, no more than the particulars of the pleaſant things which both of them mix in their Narrations; hereby they degenerate from their Character, and ſhew a kind of puerility, that is in no wiſe conformable to the gravity of an Heroick Poem, where all ought to be majeſtick.

XI.

Nothing is more eſſential to an *Epic* Poem than *Fiction*, which ought to reign throughout, *Fiction* being its ſoul. Tis by this that the moſt common things take a Character of grandneſs and ſublimity, which renders them extraordinary and admirable. *Ariſtotele* gave but the ſhadow of this precept, which *Petronius* has drawn more fully, by theſe

these words, *per ambages deorumque misteria precipitandus est liber spiritus*. 'Tis thus that meanest things become Noble; that *Thetis* in *Homer*, throws herself at the feet of *Jupiter*, that the Gods assemble in Council, where arise great debates, their spirits grow warm, and all heaven is divided into parties; for what? because, indeed, *Achilles's Mistress* was taken from him, which at the bottom is but a trifle. 'Tis by this great Art, that all the Voyages, and indeed every step that *Telemachus* made in the *Odyssey*, to seek his father *Ulysses*, became considerable, because *Minerva* is of his *Retinue*, and of his *Council*; and all became remarkable, by the impression they receiv'd from the conduct of a Deity, that presides over wisdom. 'Tis finally by this that *Virgil* gives greatness and lustre to the meanest things he speaks. If *Aeneas* break a bough, in the third of his *Aeneid*, to pay a pious duty to a Tomb that he finds accidentally in his way, the ghost of *Polydorus* speaks to him from the bottom of the Tomb, and this makes an *Episode*. If *Aruns* draw an Arrow in the eleventh Book, it is by the direction of *Apollo*, who does interest himself therein to kill *Camilla*.

Finally, all has relation to the *Gods* and their *Ministry*, even to the least actions that are describ'd in this Poem, to heighten the lustre of all that is there done, in that *marvellous* way, whereof *Aristotle* gives so admirable Lesſons.

XII.

BUt the importance is, as I before have observed, that this *admirable* be *probable*, by a just mixture, and temperament of the one and the other. For the Heroick action which the Poet proposes to imitate, must be render'd not only worthy of *admiration*, but also of *credit*, to attain its end. The Poets ordinarily are carried without consideration to speak incredible things, whilst they aim too much at the *marvellous*; they thrust imprudently into the *Fable*, without managing the *truth*, because they would *please*, without taking care to *persuade*; and they scarce ever think of the preparations, and all the *colours* of *decency* that must be employ'd, whereon to ground the *verisimilitude*. And 'tis thus that by a false *Idea* they have of *Poesie*, they place its beauty in the pleasant

fant *surprises* of something extraordinary wonderful: whereas in truth it is not regularly to be found, but in what is natural and *probable*. For the sure way to the heart, is not by surprizing the spirit; and all becomes *incredible* in Poetry, that appears *incomprehensible*. Scarce any of the Poets but *Virgil*, had the Art, by the preparation of *incidents*, to manage the *probability* in all the circumstances of an *heroick* action. *Homer* is not altogether so scrupulous and regular in his contrivances; his *Machins* are less just, and all the measures he takes, to save the *probability*, are, less exact; I shall not give a particular in a Subject, where I only allow my self to make Reflections on the general principles of *Poesie*. Many Reflections may be made in the works of both the ancient and modern Poets, on the subject of this observation; for the necessity of *probability* is a great check to the Poets; who think to make the *incidents* the more *heroick*, by how much more *wonderful* and more surprizing they be, without regarding whether they be *natural*.

XIII.

Finally, the sovereign perfection of an *Epick Poem*, in the opinion of *Aristotle*, consists in the just proportion of all the parts. The marvellous of Tragedy consists in the *pathetical* stile; but the marvellous of an *Heroick Poem*, is that perfect connexion, that just agreement, and the admirable relation, that the parts of this great work have each to other, as the perfection of a great Palace, consists in the uniformity of design, and in the proportion of parts. It is this *Symmetry* that *Horace* so much commends in the beginning of his Book of *Poets*, where he taxes the ridiculousness of the extravagant disproportion in the Picture he speaks of; and which he compares to the prodigious Adventures of *Dolphins in the Forests*, and *wild Bees in the Sea*, and all the other images he so much blames, because disproportionable to the subject. And this proportion that *Aristotle* demands, is not only in the quantity of the parts, but likewise in the quality. In which point *Tasso* is very faulty, who mixes in his Poem

em the light Character with the *serious*, and all the force and majesty of *Heroick*, with the softness and delicacy of the *Eglogue* and *Lyrick Poesie*. For the *Shepherds* adventures with *Herminia* in the *seventh Canto*, and the Letters of her *lovers Name*, which she carv'd on the bark of *bayes and beeches*, the moan she made to the *Trees*, and *Rocks*; the *purling streams*, the *embroidered meadows*; the *singing of Birds*, in which the Poet himself took so much pleasure: the *enchanted wood* in the *thirteenth Canto*; the *songs of Armida* in the *fourteenth* to *inspire Rinaldo* with love, the *caresses* this Sorceress made him, the description of her *Palace*, where nothing is breath'd but softness and effeminacy, and those other affected descriptions have nothing of that grave and *majestick Character*, which is proper for *Heroick Verse*. 'Tis thus that *Sannazarus*, in his *Poem de partu virginis*, has injudiciously mingled the *Fables of Paganism* with the *mysteries of Christian Religion*; as also *Camæus*, who speaks without discretion of *Venus* and *Bacchus*, and the other *profane Petties* in a *Christian Poem*. It is not sufficient that all be grand and magnificent in an *Epick Poem*, all must be just, uniform,

uniform, proportionable in the different parts that compose it.

XIV.

THis proportion of parts is so essential to heroick, that it ought likewise to be (if I may so say) the soul of all little Poems; as are *Epithalamiums*, *Panegyrics*, and others that are made on the birth, and brave actions of great men; and these Poems are so far perfect, as they have that unity and proportion of parts, requisite for a complete work. In this ordinarly are faulty the *Panegyrists*; and all those pretended Poets, that seek to make their fortune, by making their Court to great persons. For besides that there is nothing more difficult, than to praise, and that by so bold an enterprize, one ordinarly exposes himself to be render'd ridiculous, as well as those he commends, because he does it ill; the common undertakers, in this kind, who have not force to form handsomly a design, loose the reins to their fancy; and after they have pil'd a heap of gross and deform'd praises without order or connexion one upon another,

another, this, forsooth, must be call'd a *Panegyrick*. 'Tis thus that *Claudian* has *prais'd* the Emperour *Honorius* and the Consuls, *Probinus*, *Olybrius*, *Stilicon*, and the other illustrious persons of his time. Throughout all his *Panegyricks* reigns an air of youthfulness, that has nothing of what is *solid*, though there appear some wit. I speak not of *Ausonius*, nor *Prudentius*, and the *Latin Poets*, who have writ *Panegyricks*; because all of them have writ after this manner, and yet more *feebly*, according to the *decline* of the Ages in which they writ. *Tibullus* himself, otherwise so exact and polite in his *Elegies*, falls short in his *Panegyrick* of *Messala*; so hard is it to *praise* well. And nothing perhaps has contributed more to render the Character of a Poet a little ridiculous, than the vile and unmanly flatteries whereby most part of those that profess'd *Poetry* have debas'd themselves. For a man always praises ill, when he *praises* for interest; and there is nothing but these sottish praises that bring a disparagement on Poets. What art, what springs, what turns, what wit must be employ'd, to praise well, and how few are capable to do it? for praise has always something gross
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in it, if it lie too open, and go in a direct line. *Voiture*, one of the most delicate Wits of these latter Ages, never scarce, commended any but in *drollery*; and it may be said that of a long time none has done it with more success. The true Models, that ought to be taken, to praise well, are the Poems of *Homer* and *Virgil*; *Homer* praises not *Achilles*, but by the simple and bare relation of his actions; and never was man prais'd so delicately as *Augustus*, by *Virgil*; it is not but, as it were, by covert paths that he conducts him to glory. There was not a *Roman* that had any thing of understanding, who knew not well that *Virgil* commended not the piety of *Aeneas*, but to honour that of *Augustus*, whose portraict he draws in his *Heroe*; for whatever the Poet sayes of the one, is only for the other. Whereby, one may say, that never man knew better the art of praising; for he saves all the modesty of the person he praiseth, even whil'st he overwhelms him with praise. Finally, the true art of praising, is to say laudable things simply, but delicately; for praises are not to be endur'd, unless they be *fine* and hidden. The truth is, 'tis so hard a thing to praise as one ought,

ought, that it is a Rock which they that are wise should shun. And since the Poets are ordinarily too lavish in this kind, they may make advantage sometimes of this Reflection, to save their Reputation, that whilst they pretend to give honour to *particulars*, themselves be not pited by the *publick*. This is all that can be observ'd most essential to an *Epick Poem*; and now follows a judgment that may be made of those who have writ in this kind of *Poesie*.

XV.

Homer is the most perfect Model of the *Heroick Poesie*, and he only, saith *Aristotle*, deserves the name of Poet; 'tis certain, never man had a more happy Genius. *Dionysius Halicarnassens* commends him chiefly for the contrivance of his design, the greatness and majesty of his expression, the sweet and passionate motions of his sentiments. *Hesiod*, saith he, was content to be delightful, and to speak well. All the other Greek Potts that writ in this sort of Verse, have acquitted themselves so meanly, that they have gain'd with posterity a reputation only

only proportionable to the poorness of their *Genius*. *Caluthus* in his Poem of the rape of *Helen*, has nothing considerable, the design is shallow, the stile cold and flat. The Poem of *Tryphiodorus* on the taking of *Troy*, is of a gross and low character, as likewise the *History* of *Leander* by *Musæus*. The Poem of *Apollonius Rhodius*, on the expedition of the *Argonauts*, is of a slender character, and has nothing of that nobleness of expression of *Flower*; the *Fable* is ill invented, and the list of the *Argonauts* in the first Book is flat. *Quintus Calaber* who would undertake to write the supplement to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, without having the least sprinkling of *Homer's* easie and natural vein, has nothing exact or regular. *Nicander* is hard, *Oppian* dry; and the Poem of *Nonnus*, not so much a Poem, as a *Romance*, or *History* of the Birth, Adventures, Victories, and *Apotheosis* of *Bacchus*. The design is too vast, the *Fable* ill wrought, without art, without order, without probability, the stile is obscure and cumber'd. For the *Latins*, never any possess'd all the graces of *Poesie* in so eminent a degree, as *Virgil*; he has an admirable taste for what is natural, an exquisite
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judgment for the contrivance, an incomparable *delicacy* for the numbers and harmony of *versification*. The *design* of his Poem, well consider'd in all the circumstances, is the most judicious and the best devis'd that ever was, or ever will be. *Ovid* has *wit*, *art*, *design* in his *Metamorphosis*; but he has *youthfulnesses* that could hardly be pardon'd, but for the vivacity of his *wit*, and a certain happiness of *fancy*. *Lucan* is great and sublime, but has little judgment. *Scaliger* blames his continual Transports, for, in effect, he is excessive in his discourse, where he affects rather to appear a Philosopher, than a Poet. *Petrarch* in his little Poem of the *corruption of Rome*, falls into all the faults that he condemns; never man gave more judicious Rules for *Poetry*, and never man observ'd them worse. *Statius* is as *fantastical* in his *Idea's*, as in his expressions; the greatness that appears in his stile is more in the words, than in the things: his two Poems have nothing in them regular, all is *vast* and disproportionable. *Silius Italicus* is much more regular; he owes more to his industry, than to his nature, there seems some judgment and conduct in his design,

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but nothing of greatness and nobleness in his expression; and if one may rely on the younger *Pliny's* judgment, there is more art than wit in his Poem; it is rather the *History* of the second *Punick War*, than a Poem. That of *Valerius Flaccus* on the *Argonauts*, is incomparably mean; the fable, the contrivance, the conduct, all there are of a very low character. *Claudian* hath wit and fancy; but no taste for that delicacy of the numbers, and that *turn* of the Verse, that the skilful admire in *Virgil*; he falls perpetually into the same cadence; for that cause, one can hardly read him without being wearied; and he has no elevation in any manner. *Ansonius* and *Prudentius* had not a *Genius* strong enough, to overcome the grossness of the Age they liv'd in.

XVI.

FOR the *modern*, this judgment may be given. In the Ages succeeding, when Letters pass'd from *Italy* into *Africk*, the *Arabians*, though lovers of Poetry, produc'd nothing of Heroick; That barbarous air of the *Goths* which then

then was spread in *Europe* over all Arts, did also mingle with *Poetry*; as appears by the works of *Sidonius*, *Mamercus*, *Nemesianus*, and others, who writ then after a dry, jejune, and insipid manner. Some Ages after these, *Poesie* began to flourish again in *Italy* by the Poems of *Dante*, *Petrarch*, and *Boccace*. The Poem of *Dante*, which the *Italians* of those days, call'd a *Comedy*, passes for an *Epick* Poem in the opinion of *Castelvetro*; but it is of a sad and woful contrivance. And speaking generally *Dante* has a strain too profound, *Petrarch* too vast, *Boccace* too trivial and familiar, to deserve the name of *Heroick* Poets: though they have writ with much purity in their own Tongue, especially *Petrarch* and *Boccace*. These were followed some time after by the Comte of *Scandian*, *Matthieu Boyardo*, who made the Poem of the loves of *Orlando* and *Angelica*; by *Oliviero* who writ a Poem on *Germany*; by *Pulci* in his *Morgante*; by *Ariosto* in his *War of the Moors* under their King *Agramante* against *Charlemagne*; who all suffer'd their wit to be squander'd on the Books of *Chevalry* and *Romances* of those times. *Ariosto* has I know not what of an *Epick* Poem more

than the others, because he had read *Homer* and *Virgil*; he is pure, great, sublime, admirable in the expression; his descriptions are master-pieces: but he has no judgment at all; his wit is like the fruitful ground that together produces flowers and thistles; he speaks well, but thinks ill; and though all the pieces of his Poem are pretty, yet the whole work together is nothing worth, for an *Epick* Poem: he had not then seen the Rules of *Aristotle*; as *Tasso* did afterwards, who is better than *Ariosto*, whatever the *Academy of Florence* say to the contrary. For *Tasso* is more correct in his design, more regular in the contrivance of his Fable, and more complete in all the parts of his Poem, than any other *Italians*; but he mingles so much gallantry in it, and affectation, that he often forgets the gravity of his design, and the dignity of his character. I speak not of Cavalier *Marino* in his *Adonis*; it is a very ill Model, though he have as much, and perhaps more wit than the others; yet it is a sort of wild wit that runs loose with such eagerness after what is pleasant and glittering throughout his whole work, that, it seems, he has not any relish for solid things.

things. *Sannazarius* and *Vida*, who were famous much about the same time among the *Italian* Poets, one for his Poem *de partu virginis*, the other for his of the passion of our Saviour, made appear a good *Genius* for writing in *Latin*; for the purity of their stile is admirable; but the contrivance of their *Fable* has no delicateness, their *manner* is in no wise proportionable to the dignity of their Subject. *Pontanus*, *Politian*, Cardinal *Sadolet*, *Falcotti*, *Strozzi*, Cardinal *Bembo*, and many other *Italians*, writ at the same time, in *Latin* pure enough, but with a very indifferent wit. *Camœus*, who is the onely *Heroick* Poet of *Portugal*, regarded only to express the haughtiness of his Nation in his Poem of the *Conquest of the Indies*. For he is fierce and fastuous in his composition, but has little discernment, and little conduct. *Buchanan*, who is a *Scotch* Poet, has a character compos'd of many characters; his wit is easie, delicate, natural, but not great or lofty. *Hugo Grotius*, and *Daniel Heinsius*, both *Hollanders*, have writ nobly enough in *Latin* Verse; but the great Learning wherewith they were fraught, hinder'd them from thinking things in that delicate manner, which

makes the beauty. For the *French* Poets who have writ in *Heroick* Verse, *Dubartas* and *Ronsard*, had all the *Genius* their Age was capable of ; but the *French* Poets being ignorant, they both affected to appear learned, to distinguish them from the common ; and corrupted their *wit*, by an imitation of the *Greek* Poets ill understood : they were not skilful enough to place the *sublime* manner of the *Heroick* Verse in *things*, rather than in *words* ; nor were so happy to apprehend that the *French* Tongue is not capable of those compounded words, which they made after the example of the *Greek*, and with which they stufft their Poems ; and it was by this indiscreet affectation to imitate the *Antients*, that both became barbarous ; but besides, that the contrivance of the Fable of *Ronsard* in his *Franciad* is not natural, the sort of Verse he took is not enough Majestick, for an *Heroick* Poem, I speak not of other Poems whose Authors are living, they have, perhaps, their desert ; but time must make proof. Now let us see what Reflections may be made on *Dramatick* Poesie, which *Aristotle* divides into *Tragedy* and *Comedy*.

XVII.

T*Tragedy*, of all parts of *Poesie*, is that which *Aristotle* has most discuss'd ; and where he appears most exact. He alledges that *Tragedy* is a *publick Lecture*, without comparison more *instructive* than *Philosophy* ; because it teaches the *mind* by the sense, and rectifies the passions, by the passions themselves, in calming by their emotion the troubles they excite in the heart. The Philosopher had observ'd two important faults in man to be regulated, *pride*, and *hardness of heart*, and he found for both Vices a cure in *Tragedy*. For it makes man modest, by representing the great *masters of the earth humbled* ; and it makes him tender and merciful, by shewing him on the Theatre the strange accidents of life, and the unforeseen disgraces to which the most important persons are subject. But because man is naturally timorous, and compassionate, he may fall into another extreme, to be either too fearful, or too full of pity ; the too much fear may shake the constancy of mind, and the too great

compassion may enfeeble the equity. 'Tis the business of *Tragedy* to regulate these too weaknesses; it prepares and arms him against disgraces, by shewing them so frequent in the most considerable persons; and he shall cease to fear ordinary accidents, when he sees such extraordinary happen to the *biggest part* of Mankind. But as the end of *Tragedy* is to teach men not to fear too weakly the common misfortunes, and manage their fear; it makes account also to teach them to spare their compassion, for objects that deserve it. For there is an injustice in being mov'd at the afflictions of those who deserve to be miserable, One may see without pity *Clytemnestra* slain by her son *Orestes* in *Eschylus*, because she had cut the throat of *Agamemnon* her husband; and one cannot see *Hippolytus* dye by the plot of his stepmother *Phedra* in *Euripides*, without compassion; because he dyed not but for being chaste and virtuous. This to me seems, in short, the design of *Tragedy*, according to the *system* of *Aristotle*, which to me appears admirable, but which has not been explain'd as it ought by his Interpreters; they have not, it may seem, sufficiently understood the mystery, to unfold it well. XVIII.

XVIII.

BUt it is not enough that *Tragedy* be furnish'd with all the most moving and terrible Adventures, that *History* can afford, to stir in the heart those motions it pretends, to the end, it may cure the mind of those *vain fears* that may annoy it, and of those *childish compassions* that may soften it. 'Tis also necessary, sayes the Philosopher, that every Poet employ these great objects of terrour and pity, as the two most powerful springs, in art, to produce that pleasure which *Tragedy* may yield. And this pleasure which is properly of the mind, consists in the agitation of the Soul mov'd by the passions. *Tragedy* cannot be delightful to the Spectator, unless he become sensible to all that is represented, he must *enter* into all the different thoughts of the Actors, *interest* himself in their Adventures, *fear, hope, afflict* himself, and *rejoyce* with them. The Theatre is dull and languid, when it ceases to produce these motions in the Soul of those that stand by. But as of all passions *fear* and *pity* are those that make the strongest
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impressions on the heart of man, by the natural disposition he has of being afraid, and of being mollifi'd; *Aristotle* has chosen these amongst the rest, to move more powerfully the Soul, by the tender *sentiments* they cause, when the heart admits, and is pierced by them. In effect, when the Soul is shaken, by motions so natural and so humane, all the impressions it feels, become delightful; its trouble pleases, and the emotion it finds, is a kind of charm to it, which does cast it into a sweet and profound meditation; and which insensibly does engage it in all the interests that are managed on the Theatre. 'Tis then that the heart yields it self over to all the objects that are propos'd, that all images strike it, that it espouses the sentiments of all those that speak, and becomes susceptible of all the passions that are presented, because 'tis mov'd. And in this *agitation* consists all the pleasure that one is capable to receive from *Tragedy*; for the spirit of man does please it self with the different *situations*, caus'd by the different objects, and the various passions that are represented.

XIX.

IT is by this admirable Spring, that the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles* (of which *Aristotle* speaks continually, as of the most perfect Model of a *Tragedy*) wrought such great effects on the people of *Athens*, when it was represented. The truth is, all is terrible in that piece, and all there is moving. See the Subject. The Plague destroying *Thebes*, *Oedipus* the King concerned at the loss of his Subjects, causes the Oracle to be consulted, for a remedy. The Oracle ordains him to revenge the assassinat committed on the person of his Predecessor King *Laius*. *Oedipus* rages in horrible imprecations against the author of the crime, without knowing him; he himself makes a strict search to discover him; he questions *Creon*, *Tiresias*, *Jocasta*, and a man of *Corinth* for intelligence; and it appear'd by the account that this Prince received, that he himself committed the murder, he would punish. The minds of the Spectators are in a perpetual suspense; all the words of *Tiresias*, *Jocasta*, and the *Corinthian*, as they give light to the discovery, cause terrors and sur-

surprises; and clear it by little and little. *Oedipus* finding it to be himself that was Author of the *assassinat*, by evidence of the testimonies, at the same time understood that *Laius* whom he had slain, was his Father; and that *Jocasta*, whom he had married, is his Mother, which he knew not till then; because he had from his Infancy been brought up in the Court of the King of *Corinth*. This *discovery* is like a Thunderclap that oblig'd him to abandon himself to all the despair that his Conscience inspir'd; he tears out both his eyes, to punish himself the more cruelly with his own hands. But this *Criminal* whom all the world *abhors* before he is known, by a return of *pity* and tenderness, becomes an object of *compassion* to all the *Assembly*; now he is bemoan'd, who a moment before pass'd for execrable; and they melt at the misfortunes of the person they had in horror; and excuse the most abominable of all Crimes, because the Author is an *Innocent unfortunate*, and fell into this crime, that was foretold him, notwithstanding all the precautions he had taken to avoid it; and what is most strange, is, that all the steps he made to carry him from the murder, brought

brought him to commit it. Finally; this flux and reflux of indignation, and of pity, this revolution of horror and of tenderness, has such a wonderful effect on the minds of the Audience; all in this piece moves with an *air* so delicate and passionate, all is *unravel'd* with so much art, the suspensions manag'd with so much *probability*; there is made such an universal *emotion* of the Soul, by the *surprises*, *astonishments*, *admiration*s; the sole *incident* that is form'd in all the piece, is so natural, and all tends so in a direct line to the *discovery* and *catastrophe*; that it may not only be said, that never *Subject* has been better devised than this, but that never can be invented a better, for *Tragedy*. And thus also it was that the *Andromeda* of *Enripides* (so much boasted of in *Athenens*, and an *Episode* whereof *Alexander* sung in the last Banquet of his life) wrought those wonderful effects in the City *Abdera*; when it was acted there by *Archelaus* under the Reign of *Lyfimachus*. The two parts of *Perseus* and *Andromeda*, the misfortunes of this Princess expos'd to the Sea-monster, and all that mov'd *terror* and *pity* in this representation, made so strong and violent impression on the people,

people, That they departed, saith *Lucian*, from the Theatre, possess'd (as it were) with the spectacle, and this became a publick malady, wherewith the imaginations of the Spectators were seiz'd. Something of a grosser stroke of this sort of impressions made by Tragedy, has even happen'd in our dayes. When *Mondory* acted the *Mariamne* of *Tristan*, the people never went away but sad and pensive, making reflection on what they had seen, and struck with great pleasure at the same time. These are the two great springs of the Greek Tragedy, and all that is marvellous in Dramatick Poems, results principally from what there is of pity and terror in the objects represented.

XX.

Modern Tragedy turns on other principles; the *Genius* of our (the French) Nation is not strong enough, to sustain an action on the Theatre by moving only terror and pity. These are *Machins* that will not play as they ought, but by great thoughts, and noble expressions, of which we are not indeed altogether so capable, as the *Greeks*.
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Perhaps our Nation, which is naturally gallant, has been oblig'd by the necessity of our Character to frame for our selves a new *system* of Tragedy to suit with our humour. The *Greeks*, who were popular Estates, and who hated *Monarchy*, took delight in their spectacles, to see Kings humbled, and high Fortunes cast down, because the exaltation griev'd them. The *English*, our Neighbours, love blood in their sports, by the quality of their temperament: these are *Insulaires*, separated from the rest of men; we are more humane. Gallantry moreover agrees with our *Manners*; and our Poets believ'd that they could not succeed well on the Theatre, but by sweet and tender *sentiments*; in which, perhaps, they had some reason: for, in effect, the passions represented become deform'd and insipid, unless they are founded on *sentiments* conformable to those of the *spectator*. 'Tis this that obliges our Poets to stand up so strongly for the privilege of Gallantry on the Theatre, and to bend all their Subjects to love and *tenderness*; the rather, to please the *Women*, who have made themselves Judges of these divertisements, and
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usurped the right to pass sentence. And
 some besides have suffer'd themselves to
 be prepossess'd, and led by the *Spani-*
ards, who make all their *Cavaliers* amo-
 rous. 'Tis by them that *Tragedy* began to
 degenerate; and we by little and little
 accustom'd to see *Heroes* on the Thea-
 tre, smitten with another love than that
 of *glory*; and that by degrees all the
great men of Antiquity have lost their
 characters in our hands. 'Tis likewise
 perhaps by this *gallantry* that our Age
 would devise a colour to excuse the
 feebleness of our wit; not being able
 to sustain always the same action by the
 greatness of words and thoughts. How-
 ever it be; for I am not hardy enough,
 to declare my self against the publick;
 'tis to degrade *Tragedy* from that *majesty*
 which is proper to it, to mingle in it
 love, which is of a character alwayes
light, and little suitable to that *gravity* of
 which *Tragedy* makes profession. Hence
 it proceeds, that these *Tragedies* mixed
 with *gallantries*, never make such admi-
 rable impressions on the spirit, as did
 those of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*; for all
 the bowels were moved by the great
 objects of *terror* and *pity* which they
 proposed. 'Tis likewise for this, that the
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reputation of our modern *Tragedies* so soon decays, and yield but small delight at *two years end*; whereas the Greek please yet to those that have a good taste, after two thousand years; because what is not grave and serious on the Theatre, though it give delight at present, after a short time grows distasteful, and unpleasant; and because, what is not proper for great thoughts and great figures in *Tragedy* cannot support it self. The Ancients who perceiv'd this, did not interweave their *gallantry* and love, save in *Comedy*. For love is of a character that always degenerates from that *Heroick air*, of which *Tragedy* must never divest it self. And nothing to me shews so mean and senseless, as for one to amuse himself with whining about frivolous kindnesses, when he may be admirable by great and noble *thoughts*, and sublime expressions. But I dare not presume so far on my own capacity and credit, to oppose my self, of my own head against a usage so established. I must be content modestly to propose my doubts; and that may serve to exercise the *Wits*, in an Age that onely wants *matter*. But to end this *Reflection* with a touch of *Christianism*, I am persuaded, that the inno-

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cence of the Theatre might be better preserv'd according to the *Idea* of the *ancient Tragedy* : because the *new* is become too effeminate, by the softness of latter Ages ; and the Prince de Conty who signaliz'd his zeal against the *modern Tragedy*, by his Treatise on that Subject, would, without doubt, have allowed the *ancient*, because that has nothing that may seem dangerous.

XXI.

THe other faults of *modern Tragedy* are ordinarily that either the *Subjects* which are chosen are mean and frivolous ; or the *Fable* is not well wrought, and the *contrivance* not regular ; or that they are too much crowded with *Episodes* ; or that the *Characters* are not preserv'd and sustain'd ; or that the *incidents* are not well prepar'd ; or that the *Machins* are forced ; or that, what is *admirable* fails in the *probability*, or the *probability* is too plain and flat ; or that the *surprises* are ill managed, the *knots* ill tyed, the *loosing* them not natural, the *Catastrophes* precipitated, the *Thoughts* without elevation, the *Expressions*

ons without majesty, the *Figures* without grace, the *Passions* without colour, the *Discourse* without life, the *Narrations* cold, the *Words* low, the *Language* improper, and all the *Beauties* false. They speak not enough to the heart of the Audience, which is the onely Art of the Theatre, where nothing can be delightful but that which moves the affections, and which makes impression on the Soul; little known is that *Rhetorick* which can lay open the passions by all the natural degrees of their birth, and of their progress: nor are those *Morals* at all in use, which are proper to mingle these *different interests*, those *opposite glances*, those *clashing maxims*, those *reasons* that destroy each other, to ground the incertitudes and irresolutions, and to animate the Theatre. For the Theatre being essentially destined for *action*, nothing ought to be idle, but all in agitation, by the thwarting of passions that are founded on the different interests, that arise; or by the embroilment that follows from the *intrigue*. Likewise there ought to appear no *Actor*, that carries not some design in his head, either to cross the designs of others, or to support his own; all ought

to be in trouble, and no calm to appear, till the *action* be ended by the *Catastrophe*. Nor finally, is it well understood that it is not the admirable intrigue, the surprising and wonderful events, the extraordinary incidents that make the beauty of a Tragedy, it is the *discourses* when they are natural and passionate. *Sophocles* was not more successful than *Euripides* on the Theatre at *Athens*, but by the *discourse*, though the Tragedies of *Euripides* have more of *action*, of *morality*, of wonderful *incidents*, than those of *Sophocles*. It is by these faults, more or less great, that Tragedy in these dayes has so little effect on the mind; that we no longer feel those agreeable *trances*, that make the pleasure of the Soul, nor find those *suspensions*, those *ravishments*, those *surprises*, those *admiration*s that the *ancient* Tragedy caus'd; because the *modern* have nothing of those astonishing and terrible objects that *affrighted*, whilst they *pleas'd*, the Spectators, and made those great impressions on the Soul, by the ministry of the passions. In these dayes men go from the Theatre as little mov'd as when they went in, and carry their *heart* along with them, *untoucht* as they brought it: so that the pleasure they

they receive there, is become as superficial, as that of *Comedy*, and our gravest Tragedies are (to speak properly) no more but *heighten'd Comedies*.

XXII.

IT is not but that the *Ancients* had likewise their faults. *Æschylus* had scarce any principle for *manners*, and for the *decencies*; his *Falles* are too simple, the *contrivance* wretched, the *expression* obscure and blunder'd; scarce ought can be understood of his Tragedy of *Agamemnon*. But because he believ'd that the secret of the Theatre is to speak *pompously*, he bestow'd all his art on the words without any regard to the *thoughts*. *Quintilian* says, that he is sublime and lofty to extravagance: in effect, he never speaks in *cold blood*, and says the most indifferent things in a *tragick buff*; likewise in the images that he draws, the colours are too *glaring*, and the strokes too gross. He, who writes his life, relates that in one of the *Chorus's* of his Tragedy of the *Eumenides*, he so horribly frightened the *Audience*, that the spectacle made the children swoond,

and the Women with child suffer *abortion*. Finally, his *Enthusiasm*, it seems, never left him, he is so exalted, and so little natural. *Sophocles* is too elaborate in his discourse, his Art is not enough hidden, in some of his pieces, it lies too open and near the day; he sometimes becomes obscure, by his too great affectation to be sublime; and the nobleness of his expression, is injurious to the perspicuity; his *plots* are not all so happily *unravel'd*, as that of the *Oedipus*. The *discovery* in the *Ajax* answers not to the *intrigue*; the Author ought not to have ended a spectacle of that terrour and pity with a dull and frivolous contest about the *Sepulture* of *Ajax*, who then had slain himself. And in the same piece that *Machin* of *Minerva* is too violent, who casts an enchantment over the eyes of *Ajax*, to save *Ulysses*, whom *Ajax* would have kill'd, if he had known him. *Oedipus* ought not to have been ignorant of the assassinat of the King of *Thebes*; the ignorance he is in of the murder, which makes all the beauty of the *intrigue*, is not *probable*. *Euripides* is not exact in the contrivance of his Fables; his Characters want variety, he falls often into the same thoughts, on the
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same adventures ; he is not enough a religious observer of *deencies* ; and by a too great affectation to be moral and *sententious*, he is not so ardent and passionate as he ought to be ; for this reason he goes not to the heart, so much as *Sophocles* ; there are *precipitations* in the preparation of his *Incidents*, as in the *Suppliants*, where *Theseus* levies an Army, marches from Athens to Thebes, and returns on the same day. The discoveries of his Plots are nothing natural, these are perpetual *Machins* ; *Diana* makes the discovery in the Tragedy of *Hippolitum* ; *Minerva* that of the *Iphigenia* in *Taurica* ; *Thetis* that of *Andromache* ; *Castor* and *Pollux* that of *Helena*, and that of *Electra* ; and so of others. After all, as these three Authors are the first Models of Tragedy, they are great in their designs, *judicious* in their fables, *passionate* in their expressions ; throughout in their Works predominates a *genius*, *nature*, and *good sense*. And though they are guilty of their faults, yet it may be said, that all which is of them is *original*. The latter *Greeks*, whereof *Ephesstion* speaks, as *Lycophron*, *Sositheus*, and the others that flourish'd under King *Ptolomy Philadelphus* ; and the first *La-*

tins, as *Livius Andronicus*, *Accius*, *Pacuvius*, who apply'd themselves to Tragedy, had not any success in that way. The *Romans*, for some time, took delight in *Comedy*. But so soon as the polite Learning was a little establish'd at *Rome*, most part of the great men employ'd themselves in writing *Tragedies*. *Catullus* made one *Tragedy* of *Alcmeon*, out of which *Cicero* cites some Verses in his *Lucullus*; *Gracchus* made *Thyestes*, whereof *Censorinus* makes mention; *Cæsar* made *Adrastus* whereof *Festus* speaks; *Rutilius* made *Astyanax*, of which *Fulgentius* speaks; *Mecænas* made *Octavia*, which *Priscian* mentions; *Ovid* made *Medea*, of which *Quintilian* gives some account; and seeing that these *Tragedies* are lost, no judgment can be made of them, but by the merit of their Authors. But the esteem these great men had for this sort of Poem then in a time when good sense so much sway'd, may sufficiently justify *Cardinal Richelieu*, who was so infinitely affected with it; and he little authorizes the ignorance at Court in these things, which is so much the mode at this day. The onely *Tragedies* that remain of the *Latins*, are those of *Seneca*, who speaks alwayes well, but
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never speaks *naturally* ; his Verse are pompous, his Thoughts lofty, because he would dazzle ; but the contrivance of his Fables are of no great character. This Author pleases himself too much in giving his *Idea's*, instead of *real* objects ; and he represents not alwayes very regularly, what is to be represented. But it is not only in the composition of Tragedy that the *Greeks* have excelled the *Romans* ; it is also in the *magnificence* of their Theatre, these people, however *conquer'd* they have been, have had *greater thoughts* than their *Conquerors* ; and *Plutarch* assures us, that the *Athenians* have been at greater expences in the representation of their *Tragedies*, and in the rewards they propos'd to those Poets that succeeded well, than in all the *Wars* that ever they undertook for the defence of their *Republick* ; and they believ'd not this expence unprofitable, since it was to inspire the people with *thoughts* conformable to the good of their estate.

XXIII.

THE following Ages became successively so gross one after another, that

that they could produce nothing in this kind of *Poesie* worthy of an reflection. The *Italians* and *Spaniards* of latter Ages, had their wit too much corrupted with *Romances*, to sustain the greatness of the character of Tragedy: notwithstanding *Trissino* would make his *Sophonisbe*, and *Tasso* his *Torismondo*, after the pattern of the Tragedies of *Sophocles*: but they could not reach that character. The *Jephthes*, and *Baptistes* of *Buchanan*, contain little considerable, except the purity of stile in which these Tragedies are written. The *Sedecias* of *Malapertus*, the *Crispus* of *Stephonius*, the *Josephus* of *Grotius*, the *Herod* of *Heinsius*, and the other Tragedies of the learned men of the last Age, have almost all of them a contrivance too simple, the *Incidents* are cold, the *Narrations* tedious, the *Passions* forc'd, the *Stile* constrain'd. The Tragedies of *Garnier*, *Rotrou*, *Serre*, and others of that time, are yet of a far meaner character. The *English* have more of *Genius* for Tragedy than other people, as well by the spirit of their Nation which delights in cruelty, as also by the character of their language, which is proper for great expressions. But the *French*, who have apply'd themselves

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to *Tragedy* more than any others, have likewise writ with more success; and this success does strongly authorize the use, as may be seen by so many great men amongst us, who daily signalize themselves on the Theatre. But the *whimsie* of these *opera* of *Musick*, where-with the Publick are infatuated, will, perhaps, be capable to discourage them, if they be regarded. It remains to speak of *Comedy*, that of a *Lecture of virtue* which it is essentially; is become, by the licentiousness of these latter Times, a *School of debauchery*: 'tis only to re-establish it in its natural estate, as it ought to be, according to *Aristotle*, that I pretend to speak. The rest I leave to the zeal of the *Preachers*, who are a little slack on this Subject.

XXIV.

SOME pretend that *Aristotle*, who has scarce said any thing of *Comedy*, has said all, making a remark, that the *ridiculous* is to be handled in the same manner, as he has discours'd of the *grave* and *serious*; by the rule of proportion, that must be observ'd betwixt *Comedy* and *Tragedy*. That is to say, there must be

be observ'd in *Comedy*, as well as in *Tragedy*, the *decencies* of places, of times, of persons; that there must be employ'd all the colours, which ought to be the seeds and the principles of the decency; that the preparations of the *Incidents* ought to be conducted in such sort, that they serve not to render the events cold, by taking from them what they may have of advantage and grace by the surprise. For it is of importance to consider, that to prepare an *Incident* well, is not altogether to say things, that may discover; but it is to say so much only as may give place to the Audience, to divine: which also ought to be sparingly done. For the pleasure of the Spectators is to expect alwayes something that may surprise, and that is contrary to their *prejudgments*. And nothing ought to be predominant on the Theatre so much as the *suspension*; because the chief delight to be receiv'd there, is the *surprize*.

XXV.

Comedy is an image of common life; its end is to shew on the Stage the faults of particulars, in order to amend the
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the faults of the Publick, and to correct the people through a fear of being render'd ridiculous. So that which is most proper to excite laughter, is that which is most essential to *Comedy*. One may be ridiculous in words, or ridiculous in things: there is an honest laughter and a *buffoon* laughter. 'Tis meerly a gift of Nature to make every thing ridiculous. For all the actions of humane life have their *fair* and their *wrong* side, their *serious* and their *ridiculous*. But *Aristotle*, who gives precepts to make men weep, leaves none to make them laugh. This proceeds purely from the *Genius*; Art and Method have little to do with it, 'tis the work of Nature alone. The *Spaniards* have a *Genius* to discern the *ridiculous* of things much better than the *French*; and the *Italians*, who are naturally *Comedians*, express it better; their Tongue is more proper for it, by a drol-ling tone peculiar to them. The *French* may be capable of it, when their Language has attain'd its perfection. Finally, that pleasant *turn*, that *gayetie* which can sustain the delicacy of his character, without falling into *coldness*, nor into *buffoonry*: that *sine raillery*, which is the flower of wit, is the Talent which

Comedy

Comedy demands: but it must alwayes be observ'd, that the true *ridiculous* of Art, for the entertainment on the Theatre, ought to be no other but the Copy of the *ridiculous* that is found in Nature. *Comedy* is as it should be, when the Spectator believes himself really in the company of such persons as he has represented, and takes himself to be in a Family whilst he is at the Theatre; and that he there sees nothing but what he sees in the world. For *Comedy* is worth nothing at all, unless he know, and can compare the *manners* that are exhibited on the Stage, with those of such persons as he has conversation withall. 'Twas by this that *Menander* had so great success amongst the *Grecians*; and the *Romans* thought themselves in *Conversation*, whilst they sat beholding the *Comedies* of *Terence*; for they perceiv'd nothing but what they had been accustom'd to find in ordinary Companies. 'Tis the great Art of *Comedy*, to keep close to Nature, and never leave it; to have common thoughts and expressions fitted to the capacity of all the world: For it is most certainly true, that the most gross strokes of Nature, whatever they be, please alwayes more, than the
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most delicate, that are not *Natural*: nevertheless base and vulgar terms are not to be permitted on the Theatre, unless supported by some kind of wit. The *proverbs* and *wise sayings* of the People ought not to be suffer'd, unless they have some pleasant meaning, and unless they are *Natural*. This is the most general principle of *Comedy*; by which, whatever is represented, cannot fail to please; but without it, nothing. 'Tis only by adhering to Nature, that the *probability* can be maintain'd, which is the sole infallible guide, that may be followed on the Theatre. Without *probability* all is lame and faulty, with it all goes well: none can run astray who follow it; and the most ordinary faults of *Comedy* happen from thence, that the *decencies* are not well observ'd, nor the *incidents* enough prepar'd. 'Tis likewise necessary to take heed that the *colours* employ'd to prepare the *incidents*, be not too gross, to leave to the Spectator the pleasure of finding out himself what they signifie. But the most ordinary weakness of our *Comedies* is the *unravelling*; scarce ever any succeed well in that, by the difficulty there is in *untying* happily that knot which had been tyed.

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tyed. It is easie to *wind* up an intrigue, 'tis only the work of fancy; but the *unravelling* is the pure and perfect work of the judgment. 'Tis this that makes the success difficult, and if one would thereon make a little reflection, he might find that the most universal fault of *Comedies*, is, that the *Catastrophe* of it is not *Natural*. It rests to examine, Whether in *Comedy* the Images may be drawn greater than the Natural, the more to move the minds of the Spectators, by more shining portraicts, and by stronger impressions? That is to say, Whether a Poet may make a *Miser*, more covetous; a *morose* Man, more morose and troublesome than the original? To which I answer, That *Plautus*, who studied to please the common People, made them so; but *Terence*, who would please the better sort, confin'd himself within the bounds of Nature, and he represented Vices, without making them either better or worse. Notwithstanding, these extravagant characters, such as the *Citizen turn'd Gentleman*, and the *sick in imagination* of *Moliere*, fail'd not of success a little while ago at Court, where all the *tastes* are so delicate; but all things there are well receiv'd, even to the divertisements

ments of the *Provinces*, if they have any *air of Plaisanterie*; for there they love to laugh, rather than to admire. These are the most important Rules of *Comedy*. Now see those who have been famous for this kind of writing.

XXVI.

THE principal amongst the *Greeks*, are *Aristophanes* and *Menander*; the chief amongst the *Latins*, are *Plautus* and *Terence*. *Aristophanes* is not exact in the contrivance of his Fables, his Fictions are not very probable; he mocks persons too grossly, and too openly. *Socrates* whom he plays upon so eagerly in his *Comedies*, had a more delicate *air* of Raillery than he; but was not so shameless. It is true, *Aristophanes* writ during the disorder and licentiousness of the old Comedy, and that he understood the humour of the *Athenian* people, who were easily disgusted with the merit of extraordinary persons, whom he set his wit to abuse, that he might please that people. After all, he often is no otherwise pleasant than by his Buffoonry. That *Ragoust* compos'd of
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Seventy-six syllables in the last Scene of his Comedy the *Ecclesiastusai*, would not go down with us in our Age. His language is often obscure, blunder'd, low, trivial, and his frequent jingling upon words, his contradictions of opposite terms each to other; the hotchpotch of his stile, of Tragick and Comick, of serious and buffoon, of grave and familiar, is ugly; and his witticisms, often when near examin'd, prove false. *Menander* is pleasant in a more commendable manner; his stile is pure, neat, shining, natural; he persuades like an *Orator*, and instructs like a *Philosopher*. And if one may ground a true judgment on the fragments that remain of this Author, one may find that he made very pleasant images of the civil life; that he makes men speak according to their character; that one may find himself in the portraits he made of Manners, because he keeps close to Nature, and enters into the thoughts of the persons he makes to speak. Finally, *Plutarch*, in the comparison he has made of these two Authors, says, that the *Muse* of *Aristophanes* is like an impudent, and that of *Menander* resembles a vertuous woman. For the two *Latin Comick Poets*, *Plautus*

is ingenious in his designs, happy in his imaginations, fruitful in his invention; yet there are some insipid jests that escape from him in the *taste* of *Horace*; and his *good sayings* that make the people laugh, make sometimes the honestest sort to pity him: 'tis true, he says the best things in the world; and yet very often he saves the most wretched; this a man is subject to, when he endeavours to be too witty; he will make laughter by extravagant expressions, and *hyperboles*, when he cannot be successful to make it by things. *Plautus* is not altogether so regular in the *contrivance* of his pieces, nor in the *distribution* of the acts; but he is more simple in his *subjects*: for the *Fables* of *Terence* are ordinarily compounded, as is seen in the *Andria* which contains two loves. This is what was objected to *Terence*, that he made one *Latin Comedy* of two *Greek*, the more to animate his Theatre. But then the *Plots* are more naturally *unravel'd*, than those of *Plautus*; as those of *Plautus* are more natural than those of *Aristophanes*. And though *Cesar* call *Terence* a diminutive *Menander*, because he onely had the sweetness and the smoothness, but had not the force and

vigor, yet he has writ in a *manner* so natural, and so judicious, that of a *Copy*, as he was, he is become an *original*; for never man had so clear an insight into Nature. I shall speak nothing of *Lucilius*, of whom nothing now is left but *fragments*. All we know of him, is what *Varro* relates, that he was happy in the Subjects that he chose: but never person had a better *Genius* for *Comedy*, than the Spaniard *Lope de Vega*; he had copious Wit join'd with great advantages of Nature, and an admirable facility; for he has compos'd more than Three hundred *Comedies*; his Name alone gave applause to his pieces, so strongly was his reputation establish'd: and it was sufficient that a work came from his hands, to merit the publick approbation. But he had a Wit too vast to be confin'd to Rules, or admit of any bounds; 'twas this oblig'd him to abandon himself to the swing of his *Genius*, because he might alwayes rely on it. He never consulted other Commentary but the *gust* of his Auditors, and govern'd himself by the *success* of his pieces, rather than by *reason*. Thus he disengag'd himself of all the scruples of *unity*, and the superstitions of *probability*.

ty. But as most commonly he is for *refining* upon the *ridiculous*, and wou'd be too *witty*, his fancies are often more *fortunate*, than they are *just*, and have more of the droll, than they have of what is natural; for by too much subtilty in his drollery, his Wit becomes false, by reason 'tis forc'd to be too delicate; and his graces become cold, by being too *fine*: but amongst the *French*, never any carried *Comedy* so high as *Moliere*. For the ancient *Comick* Poets had onely the *folk* of the Family to make mirth with on the Theatre; but *Moliere's* fools in the Play are the *Marquises*, and the persons of Quality; others have been content to play upon the common and Countrey conversation in their *Comedies*, *Moliere* has made bold with all *Paris* and the *Court*. He is the onely man amongst them who has discover'd those lines of Nature that distinguish and make her known. The beauties of the portraicts he draws are so natural, that they make themselves perceiv'd by the grossest apprehensions; and his talent of being pleasant, is improv'd one half the more, by that he has of counterfeiting to the life. His *Misanthrope*, in my opinion, is the most complete character, and withal,

the most singular that ever appear'd on the Theatre. But the *contrivance* of his *Comedies* is alwayes defective in something, and his *Plots* are never handsomely *unravel'd*. This is what may be said in general of *Comedy*.

XXVII.

THE *Eglogue* is the most considerable of the little Poems; it is an image of the life of *Shepherds*. Therefore the matter is low, and nothing great is in the *Genius* of it; it's business is to describe the *loves*, the *sports*, the *piques*, the *jealousies*, the *disputes*, the *quarrels*, the *intrigues*, the *passions*, the *adventures*, and all the little *affairs* of *Shepherds*. So that its character must be simple, the wit easie, the expression common; it must have nothing that is exquisite, neither in the thoughts, nor in the words, nor in any *fashions* of speech; in which the *Italians*, who have writ in this kind of Verse, have been mistaken: for they alwayes aim at being witty, and to say things too finely. The true character of the *Eglogue* is simplicity, and modesty: its figures are sweet, the passions tender,

der, the motions easie; and though sometimes it may be passionate, and have little transports, and little despairs, yet it never rises so high as to be fierce or violent; its *Narrations* are short, *Descriptions* little, the *Thoughts* ingenious, the *Manners* innocent, the *Language* pure, the *Verse* flowing, the *Expressions* plain, and all the *Discourse* natural; for this is not a great *talker* that loves to make a noise. The Models to be proposed to write well in this sort of *Poesie*, are *Theocritus* and *Virgil*. *Theocritus* is more sweet, more natural, more delicate, by the character of the *Greek Tongue*. *Virgil* is more judicious, more exact, more regular, more modest, by the character of his own *Wit*, and by the *Genius* of the *Latin Tongue*. *Theocritus* hath more of all the graces that make the ordinary beauty of *Poetry*; *Virgil* has more of *good sense*, more vigor, more nobleness, more modesty. After all, *Theocritus* is the Original, *Virgil* is only the Copy: though some things he hath Copied so happily, that they equal the Original in many places. *Moschus* and *Bion*, who writ in this sort of *Verse*, have likewise great *excellencies*, and very great delicacies in their *Idyllia*. The other Poets

who have writ *Eglogues*, as *Nemesianus*, who was an *Affrican*, and *Calphurnius* the *Sicilian* writ very meanly. The *Italians*, as *Bonarelli*, *Guarini*, *Cavalier Marino*; the *Spaniards*, as *Luis de Gongora*, *Camoens* have little of *Natural* in their *Pastorals*, their *Idyllia*, and their *Eglogues*; and *Ronsard*, amongst the *French*, hath nothing tender or delicate. The *French Tongue*, however perfect it pretends to be, hath produc'd nothing in this kind of Verse, comparable to the *Eglogues* of *Virgil*; neither yet, it seems, has it force enough to express things so naturally to the life, and to sustain that great simplicity of the *Bucolique Verse*, so nobly as the *Greek* and *Latin Tongues* for the *Greek* and *Latin* have a certain character of majesty that shines even in the smallest things. The *Idea* of *Pastoral Comedies* for which the *Italians* have had so great liking, is taken from the *Cyclops* of *Euripides*. The *Greeks*, saith *Horace*, began to bring *Satyrs* on the *Theatre*, to temper the austerity of their *Tragedy*.

XXVIII.

THE principal end of *Satyr*, is to instruct the People by discrediting Vice. It may therefore be of great advantage in a State, when taught to keep within its bounds. But as *Flatterers* embroil themselves with the publick, whilst they strive too much to please particulars ; so it happens, that the Writers of *Satyr* disoblige sometimes particulars, whilst they endeavour too much to please the publick : and as downright *praises*, are too gross ; *Satyr* that takes off the mask, and reprehends Vice too openly, is not very delicate ; but though it be more difficult to *praise*, than to *blame*, because it is easier to discover in People what may be turn'd into *ridiculous*, than to understand their *merit* ; 'tis requisite notwithstanding equally to have a wit for the one, as for the other. For the same delicacies of wit, that is necessary to him who praiseth to purge his *praises* from what is *deform'd*, is necessary to him who blameth to clear the *Satyr* from what is *bitter* in it. And this *delicacy* which properly gives the relish

relish to *Satyr*, was heretofore the character of *Horace*, for it was only by the way of *jest* and merriment that he exercis'd his *Censure*. For he knew full well, that the sporting of wit, hath more effect than the strongest reasons, and the most sententious discourse, to render Vice *ridiculous*. In which *Juvenal*, with all his seriousness, has so much ado to succeed. For indeed that violent manner of declamation which throughout he makes use of, has, most commonly, but very little effect, he scarce persuades at all; because he is alwayes in *choler*, and never speaks in *cold blood*. 'Tis true, he has some *common places* of Morality that may serve to dazzle the weaker sort of apprehensions. But with all his strong expressions, *energetick* terms, and great flashes of eloquence, he makes little impression; because he has nothing that is *delicate*, or that is *natural*. It is not a true zeal that makes him talk against the misdemeanors of his Age, 'tis a *spirit* of vanity and ostentation. *Persius* who to the gravity and vehemence of *Juvenal* had join'd obscurity caus'd by the affectation he had to appear *learned*, has no better success; because he yields no delight: not but that

that he has, however, some *touches* of an hidden delicacy; but these strokes are alwayes wrap'd up in such a profound Learning, that there needs a Comment to unfold them; he speaks not but with *sadness*, what by *Horace* is said with the greatest mirth imaginable, whom sometimes he wou'd imitate; his moroseness scarce ever leaves him; he speaks not of the least things but in a heat; and he never sports, but after the most serious manner in the world. The *Satyr* which *Seneca* made on the *Apotheosis* of the Emperor *Claudius*, is of a much different character, 'tis one of the most delicate pieces of Antiquity: and the Author who otherwise throughout sustains the gravity of a Philosopher by the cold blood of his temperament, and by all the *grimaces* and severity of his Morals: seems so much the more pleasant in this, as he is more grave and more serious in all his other Works. Most part of the *Dialogues* of *Lucian*, are *Satyr*s of this kind; the Author is a pleasant *Buffoon*, who makes sport with the most serious matters, and insolently playes upon whatever is *great* in the world: he is on all occasions infinitely *witty*; but this, I confess, is a kind of foolish Character.

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We have two modern *Satyr*s writ in Prose, much-what of the same *air*, which surpass all that has been writ of this kind in these latter Ages. The first is *Spanish*, compos'd by *Cervantes*, Secretary to the Duke of *Alva*. This great man having been slighted, and received some disgrace by the Duke of *Lerma* chief *Minister* of State to *Philip III*, who had no respect for Men of Learning, writ the Romance of *Don Quixot*, which is a most fine and ingenious *Satyr* on his own Countrey; because the Nobility of *Spain*, whom he renders ridiculous by this work, were all bit in the head and intoxicated with Knight-errantry. This is a *Tradition* I have from one of my friends, who learn'd this secret from *Don Lope* whom *Cervantes* had made the *Confident* of his resentment. The other *Satyr* is *French*, made in the time of the *League*, where the Author very pleasantly teaches the Publick the intentions of the *House* of *Guise* for the *Religion*: throughout this work is spread a delicacy of wit, that fails not to shine amongst the rude and grosser wayes of expressions of those Times: and the little Verses scattered here and there in the work, are of a Character that is
most

most *fine*, and most natural. The *Satyr* of *Rablais*, however witty it be; nevertheless is stuff'd with so much *Ribaldry*, and is so little conformable to the *refinedness* of this present Age we live in, that I think it not worthy to be read by Gentlemen, no more than the *Satyrs* of *Regnier*, though he has wit enough; for he is too impudent, and observes no *decency*.

XXIX.

THE *Elegy*, by the quality of its name, is destined to *Tears* and *Complaints*; and therefore ought to be of a *doleful* Character. But afterwards it has been used in Subjects of *Tenderness*, as in *Love-matters*, and the like. The *Latins* have been more successful therein (by what appears to us) than the *Greeks*. For little remains to us of *Philetas* and *Tyrtues*, who were famous in *Greece* for this kind of Verse. They who have writ *Elegy* best amongst the *Latins*, are *Tibullus*, *Propertius*, *Ovid*. *Tibullus* is elegant and polite, *Propertius* noble and high; but *Ovid* is to be prefer'd to both; because he is more natural, more moving,

moving, and more passionate; and thereby he has better express'd the Character of *Elegy*, than the others. Some *Elegies* are left us of *Catullus*, of *Mecenas*, and *Cornelius Gallus*, which are of a great purity, and are exceedingly delicate; but the Verse of *Catullus* and *Mecenas* have too much softness, and a negligence too affected: those of *Cornelius Gallus* are more round, and support themselves better. In these latter Ages have appear'd a *German* nam'd *Lotichius*, an *Italian* call'd *Molsa*, a *Flemming* call'd *Sidronius*, who have writ *Elegies* with great elegancy. I speak not of the *French Elegies*, it is a kind of Verse which they distinguish not from *Heroick*; and they call indifferently *Elegy*, what they please, whereby the distinction of the true Character of this Verse seems not yet well establish'd amongst them.

XXX.

THE *Ode* ought to have as much nobleness, elevation, and transport, as the *Eglogue* has of simplicity and modesty. 'Tis not only the *wit* that heightens it, but likewise the *matter*. For its
use

use is to sing the praises of the *gods*, and to celebrate the illustrious actions of *great men*, so it requires to sustain all the *majesty* of its Character, an exalted nature, a great wit, a daring fancy, an expression noble and sparkling, yet pure, and correct. All the briskness and life which Art has by its *Figures*, is not sufficient to heighten *Ode* so far as its Character requires. But the reading alone of *Pindar*, is more capable to inspire this *Genius*, than all my *Reflections*. He is great in his designs, vast in his thoughts, bold in his imaginations, happy in his expressions, eloquent in his discourse: but his great vivacity hurries him sometimes past his judgment, he gives himself too much swing; his *Panegyricks* are perpetual digressions, where rambling from his Subject, he carries the Readers from Fables to Fables, from Allusions to Allusions, from Chimera's to Chimera's; for 'tis the most unbridled and irregular *fancy* in the world. But this irregularity is one part of the Character of the *Ode*, the Nature and *Genius* of it requiring Transport. *Pindar* likewise is the onely person amongst the *Greeks*, that acquired glory by this sort of writing, for little is remaining
of

of the other *nine Lyrick Poets*, whereof *Petronius* speaks. Nevertheless it may be avowed by that which is left us of the *fragments* of *Sappho*, that *Demetrius* and *Longinus* have great reason to boast so highly in their Works of the admirable *Genius* of this *Woman*; for there are found some strokes of delicacy the most *fine*, and the most passionate in the world. None can judge with any certainty of the others, of whom we have so little. *Anacreon* alone is capable to comfort us for the loss of their Works. For his *Odes* are flowers, beauties and graces perpetual: it is so familiar to him to write what is natural, and to the *life*; and he has an *air* so delicate, so easie, and so graceful; that there is nothing comparable in all Antiquity in the way he took, and in that kind of writing he followed. *Horace* found the Art to join all the force and high flights of *Pindar*, to all the sweetness and delicacy of *Anacreon*, to make himself a new Character by uniting the perfections of the other two. For besides that he had a Wit naturally pleasant, it was also great, solid, and sublime; he had nobleness in his conceits, and delicacy in his thoughts and sentiments: the parts of his *Odes* that

that he was willing to finish, are alwayes
Masker-pieces ; but it requires a very
 clear apprehension to discern all his
 Wit; for there are many *secret graces*,
 and hidden beauties in his Verse, that
 very few can discover; he also is the
 poely *Latin* Author who writ well in
 that Verse amongst the Ancients; and
 none could ever follow him, his *Genius*
 went so high. *Boetius* made some little
Odes, which he scatter'd in his Work of
the Consolation of Philosophy. But for all
 the politeness of his Wit, he could not
 surmount the *bad air* that was then pre-
 dominant; and what is most elegant in
 him, is only a false beauty, suitable to the
Genius of the Age in which he writ. A-
 mongst the *Latin* *Lyricks* of latter times.
 I find three, that distinguish themselves
 from the rest, *Casmire Sarbienski* a Pole,
Dunkan de Gerisantes and *Magdalenet*,
 both *French*. *Sarbienski* is lofty, but not
 pure; *Magdalenet* is pure, but not lofty;
Gerisantes in his *Odes* has join'd both, for
 he writes nobly, and in a stile sufficiently
 pure: but he has not so much flame as
Casmire, who had a great deal of Wit;
 and of that happy Wit, which makes
Poets. *Buchanan* has *Odes* comparable to
 those of Antiquity; but he hath great

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uneven-

unevennesses by the mixture of his Character; which is not *uniform* enough. *Muret* and *Vida* have a fancy too limited; and their *Idea* seems constrain'd, whilst too scrupulously they are addicted to *Latinity*. *Chiabrera* has had great reputation by his *Odes* amongst the *Italians*; and *Ronsard* amongst the *French*, for *Ronsard* is noble and great; but this greatness becomes deform'd and odious; by his affectation to appear learned; for he displays his *Scholarship* even to his *Mistress*. *Malherb* is exact and correct; but he *ventures nothing* and affecting to be too *discreet*, is often *cold*. *Theophile* has a great fancy, and little sense. He has some fortunate boldnesses, because he permits himself all. *Voiture* and *Sarazin* have *gay* things in their *Odes*; for they have the art of drolling pleasantly on mean Subjects, and they sustain this Character well enough, but they have not vigour and sublimity for high matters; most part of the others who have writ after them in *Lyrick Verse*, of which have been made so many *Collections*, have pitch'd upon a false delicacy of expression, which carries them afar off from the true Character of the *Ode*, which is the greatness and *majesty* of discourse;

and

and they flag in a shameful *mediocrity*: their Verses were flat, and had nothing of that heat, and that noble air so essential to the *Ode*, which ought to say nothing *low* or common. I might speak with more advantage of those who write at this present, if I had not impos'd a Law on my self not to intermeddle in giving judgment of the *living*, which would be too much confidence in me, besides the indiscretion.

XXXI.

THE *Epigram*, of all the works in Verse that Antiquity has produc'd, is the least considerable; yet this too has its beauty. This beauty consists either in the delicate *turn*, or in a lucky word. The *Greeks* have understood this sort of *Poesie* otherwise than the *Latins*. The *Greek Epigram* runs upon the *turn* of a thought that is natural, but fine and subtle. The *Latin Epigram*, by a false *taste* that sway'd in the beginning of the decay of the pure *Latinity*, endeavours to surprize the mind by some *nipping* word, which is call'd a *point*. *Catullus* writ after the former manner,

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which

which is of a *finer* Character; for he endeavours to close a natural thought within a delicate *turn* of words, and within the simplicity of a very soft expression. *Martial* was in some manner the Author of this other way, that is to say, to terminate an ordinary thought by some word that is surprising. After all, Men of a good taste, prefer'd the way of *Catullus*, before that of *Martial*; there being more of true delicacy in that, than in this. And in these latter Ages we have seen a noble *Venetian* named *Andreas Naugerius*, who had an exquisite discernment, and who by a natural *antipathy* against all that which is called *point*, which he judg'd to be of an ill relish, sacrific'd every year in Ceremony a Volume of *Martial's* Epigrams to the *Manes* of *Catullus*, in honour to his Character, which he judg'd was to be prefer'd to that of *Martial*. I find nothing to say considerable on the *Epigramists* of latter Ages. 'Tis one of the sorts of Verse, in which a man has little success; for it is a meer *luckie bit*, if it prove well. An *Epigram* is little worth, unless it be admirable; and it is so rare, to make them *admirable*, that 'tis sufficient to have made one in a mans life.

XXXII.

IT remains to speak of the *Madrigal*, the *Rondelay*, the *Sonnet*, the *Ballad*, and all the other little Verse, that are the invention of these latter Ages; but as a little *fancy* may suffice, to be successful in these kind of Works, without any *Genius*, I shall not amuse my self in making *Reflections* on the method that is to be observ'd in composing them: not but that he who has a *Genius*, would have a much different success, either by a more *happy turn* he gives to what he writes, or by a more *lively air*, or by more *natural beauties*; or finally, by more *delicate* fashions of speech; and generally, the *Genius* makes the greatest distinction in whatloever work a man undertakes. The *Character* of the smaller Verse, and of all the little Works of *Poesie*, requires that they be *natural*, together with a delicacy; for seeing the little Subjects afford no beauty of themselves, the wit of the Poet must supply that want out of its own stock. The *Sonnet* is of a Character that may receive more of *greatness* in its expression

than the other little pieces; but nothing is more essential to it, than the happy and natural turn of the *thought* that composes it. The *Rondelay* and *Madrigal* are most wretched, if they be not most elegant; and all their beauty consists in the *turn* that is given them. But it suffices to know what this *delicacy* is, that ought to be the Character of these small pieces, to understand all that belongs to them. A *word* may be delicate several wayes; either by a subtle *equivocation*, which contains a mystery in the ambiguity; or by a *hidden meaning*, which speaks all out, whilst it pretends to say nothing; or by some *fierce and bold stroke* under modest terms; or by something *brisk and pleasant*, under a serious ayre; or, lastly, by some *fine thought*, under a simple and homely expression. We find all these manners of delicacy in some of the Ancients, as in the *Socrates* of *Plato*, in *Sappho*, in *Theocritus*, in *Anacreon*, in *Horace*, in *Catullus*, in *Petronius*, and in *Martial*, these are all great Models of this Character; of which the *French* have onely in their Tongue *Marot*, Gentleman of the Chamber to *Frances* the first. He had an admirable *Genius* for this way of writing; and

and whoever have been successful in it since, have only copied him. *Voiture* had a nature for this Character; if he had not a little corrupted his Wit by the reading of the *Spaniards* and *Italians*. If these words are affected, they lose their grace, because they become cold and flat, when they are far-fetch'd. But the most general fault in these little pieces of Verse, is, when one would cram them with too much Wit. This is the ordinary Vice of the *Spaniards* and *Italians*, who labour alwayes to say things finely. This is no very good Character; for they cease to be natural, whilst they take care to be witty. This is the fault of *Quevedo* in his work of the *nine Muses*, of *Gongora* in his *Romances*, of *Preti* and *Testi* in their little Verse, of *Marino* in his *Idyllia*, of *Acquillini* in his *Madrigals*, and of all the other strangers, who would refine by false Ideas of far-fetch'd ornaments, and by affectations of Wit, which have nothing of the solid Character, and the good sense of the *Ancients*. Every small *Genius* is apt to run into this Vice, of which the late *Collections* of the *French Poesies* are full; where the Poets force themselves to be witty in spite of their *Genius*; for they ei-

ther never say things as they ought to be said; or they say nothing in the great discourses; or they load with ornaments Subjects that are not capable to suffer any; or they discover all their Art, when it should be conceal'd; or they give themselves over to the beauty of their Nature without method; or finally, they lose themselves in their *Idea's*, because they have not strength to execute handsomly what their *fancy* dictates to them.

XXXIII.

WERE I of a humor to decide, I might add to these *Reflections* the solution of some difficulties in the use of *French Poesie*, that to me seem worthy to be clear'd. The first is concerning the *transposition of words*, which some Poets seem to affect in the great *Poems*, as a kind of figure, which they pretend to make use of to give more force and nobleness to their discourse. But *Ronsard* in the Preface of his Poem of the *Franciad*, is not of that opinion, For he believes not the *French Tongue* to have a Character proper to bear in its
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expression, that sort of *Transpositions*. In effect, it is too simple and too plain to wind about the words, and give them another order than that of the natural sense, which they ought to have. I refer to those who understand good speaking, better than I do. The second difficulty, is the use of *thou* and *thee*, which the Poets employ when they speak to God, or to the King. This use to me seems neither founded on Authority, nor on Reason. For besides that the authority of the *Latin* Tongue, on which they build, is a false foundation; because that Tongue equally uses *thou* and *thee* in Prose and in Verse, for all sort of persons; our Tongue is of it self of a Character so *respectful*, that it cannot be content with those terms, for persons to whom it would give *honour*. But nothing to me appears more strong against this use, than the *manner* which the Poets themselves practise. For those who say *thou* and *thee* to God, and to great persons; never speak so to their *Mistresses*, because they believe that would want *respect*. 'Tis true, that *Theophile* has said so to his; but this was said no more, after the Language became *polish'd*; and *Voiture* never us'd it. This

is a scruple I have, and which I leave to the *Criticks* to examine. The third difficulty, is the use of *Metaphors*; for the *French* Tongue is essentially so scrupulous, that it allows nothing but what is modest, and the least thing of boldness offends its modesty. But this would be too great a delicacy to forbid *Metaphors* to Poets, with the same rigor as to *Orators*. There are *Metaphors* authoriz'd by use, which *Poesie* cannot pass by. It behoves a Poet to use them discreetly, without *shocking* the modesty of our Language. It requires a great judgment to distinguish what ought to be said in proper terms, and what in *metaphorical*. The same Censure may be pass'd on the boldness of *compounding*, and *coining new words*. *Du-bartas* has made himself ridiculous, by attempting to imitate *Homer* and *Pindar* in the invention of these kind of words. The fourth difficulty, is the *constraint of Rime*: but this can only be a difficulty to the weaker sort of *Wits*, who suffer themselves to be master'd by this servitude, which a great *Genius* employs, to give the more force to his *thoughts*, and more greatness to his *sentiments*: The last difficulty, and the most important of all the rest, is to know

know whether one may *please in Poetry* against the *Rules*? I apply this to the *French Poetry* particularly, though it be common to *Poetry* in general; because most part of our *French* make a false liberty of this bad principle. 'Tis only by this that *Moliere* would *save* the ordinary irregularity of his *Comedies*. 'Tis true, that his *rashness* has been successful; and that he has pleas'd in his pieces against Art. But I pretend that neither he, nor any others shall ever please, but by the *Rules*: they have some natural draughts whereby they are successful, and these draughts are the strokes of Art; for Art, as I have said, is nothing else, but *good sense reduc'd to method*. 'Tis only these strokes that are taking in irregular pieces, where what is irregular never pleases, because 'tis never *natural*.

XXXIV.

Finally, to conclude with a touch of Morality. Since the reputation of being modest, is more worth than that of making Verses; were I to make any, I wou'd never forsake honesty nor modesty.

deſty. For if nothing renders Men more ridiculous, than the kind opinion they conceive of themſelves, and of their performances; the Poets are yet more ridiculous than other Men, when their vanity riſes from the difficulty of ſucceeding well in their *Mystery*. But if I made Verſe better than another, I wou'd not force any man to find them good, I wou'd not have a greater opinion of my ſelf, though all the world applauded them; nor ſhou'd the ſucceſs blind me: amongſt the praises that were beſtow'd on me, I cou'd not perſuade my ſelf to ſuffer thoſe, where appear'd ought of favour; and I wou'd impoſe ſilence on them, who in commending me, ſpoke further than my Conſcience; to ſave my ſelf from that ridiculousneſs, which ſome *vain ſpirits* fall into, who wou'd have praises and admirations eternally for every thing they do. I wou'd employ all my reaſon, and all my wit, to gain more *docility*, and more ſubmiſſion, to the advice my Friends ſhou'd give me; I wou'd borrow their lights, to ſupply the weakneſs of mine; and I wou'd liſten to all the world, that I might not be ignorant of any of my faults. In the praises that I gave to thoſe
I found

I found worthy, I wou'd be so conscientious, that for no interest whatsoever, wou'd I speak against my opinion; and there shou'd never enter into any thing that went from my hands, any of those mercenary glances, which so greatly debase the Character of a Poet. Lastly, I wou'd rid myself of all the ridiculous vanities, to which those who make Verse are ordinarily obnoxious: and by this prudent Conduct I wou'd endeavor to destroy those *Fripperies* which by custom are said of a profession that might continue honourable, were it only exercis'd by men of honourable principles.

Names

Natives of the A U T H O R S
whose P O E M S are mentioned
and Censured in this Book.

A Pollon. Rhodius
Aristophanes
Acquillini
Aratus
Archilochus
Ansonius
Aristo
Anacreon
Attius.

B Acchylides
Bembo
Boccace
Boyardo
Bounefons
Bonarelli
Brebenf
Buchanan
Du-Bortas
Boetius.

C Alpburnius
Catullus
Cesar
Callimachus

Clandian
Camoens
Chiabrera
Calaber
Cervantes
Cerisantes
Casimire
Coluthus

D Amé
Diego Ximenes

E Nnius
Euripides
Eschylus
Erasthenes

F Racastorius

G Allus
Garnier
Gracchus
Grotius
Guarini
Gongara

Ho-

Names of the AUTHORS, &c.

Homer
Hesiod

Horace

Heinsius

Habert

Ion

Liv. Andronicus
Lotichius

Lope de Vega

Lucretius

Lucilius

Lucan

Lycophron

Lane

MAgdelenet
Marot

Malapertus

Mecanas

Menander

Martial

Malherb

Moliere

Molza

Le Moyne

Marino

Muret
Musæus
Mamercus

NEmesianus
Nicandor
Nonnus

Ovid
Oppian
Orpheus
Oliviero

PRudentius
Pontanus
Politianus
Paleotti
Philetas
Preti

Pindar
Plantus
Propertius
Persius
Petrarch
Pulci
Petronius
Pacuvius

Quevedo

Rab-

R *Ablais*
Racan

Ronsard

Rotrou

Reignier

Rutilius

S *Appbo*
Sophocles

Seneca

Sidonius Apollinaris

Sidronius

Stephanus

Statius

Silins Italicus

Scaliger Julius

Scaliger Josephus

Sadolet

Sanazarins

Sarazin

Sofithens

Serres

Sante Marthe

T *Asso Bernardo*
Tasso Torquato

Tryphiodorus

Theocritus

Terence

Tibullus

Testi

Tyrtaeus

Tristan

Trissino

Theophile

V *Aler. Flaccus*
Virgil

Vida

Voiture

FINIS.

